

# residential architect

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JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2007

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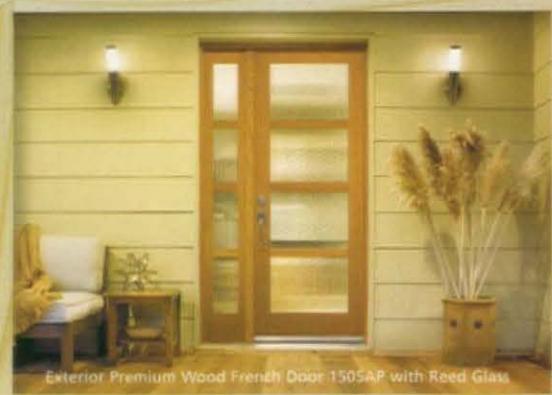
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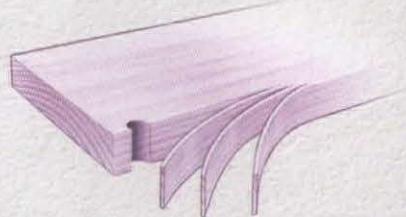


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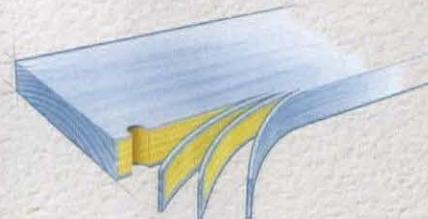
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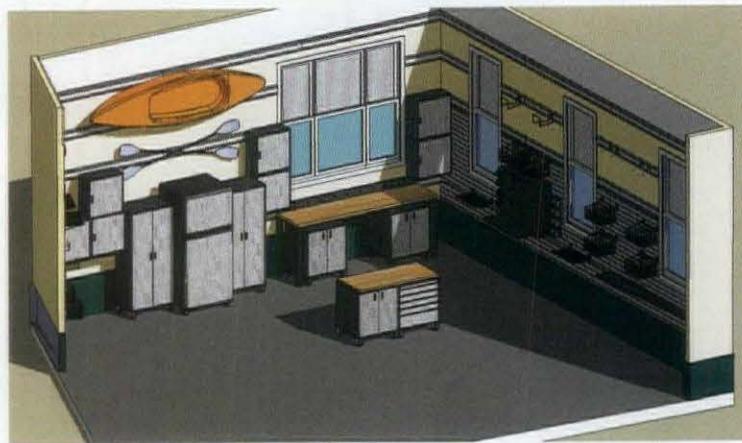
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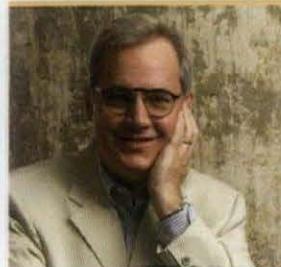
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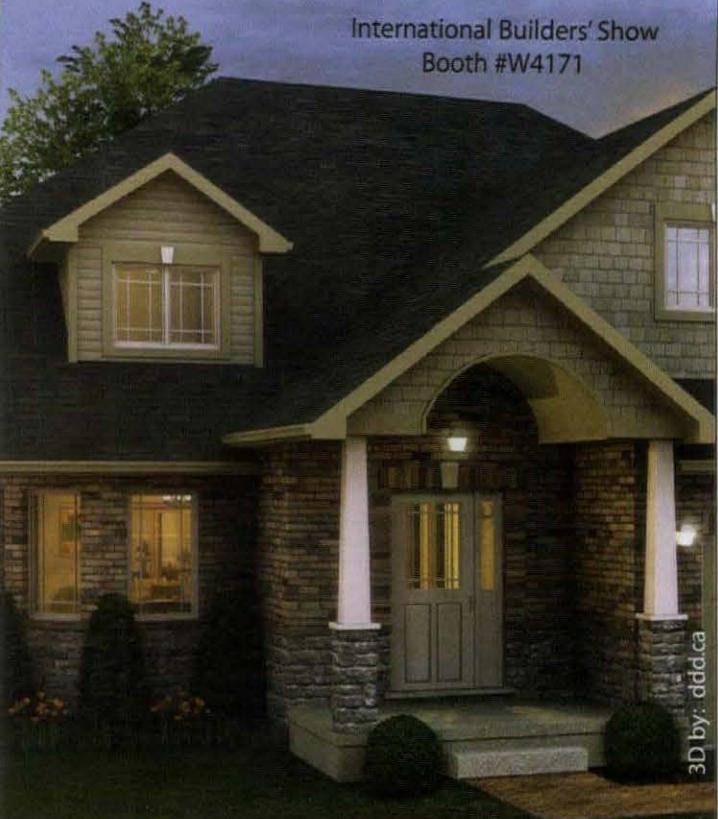
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# fitting in

designing a better house is just the beginning.

by s. claire conroy

In many parts of the country, we're running out of buildable land for single-family housing. The solution in my neck of the woods is the teardown or infill house. In some cases, it's a good thing—inferior housing disappears and more energy-efficient and commodious housing replaces it. But in most instances, the replacement house ignores the scale of the neighborhood, the style of adjacent housing, and the topography of the site. This is causing great controversy and emergency legislation in a number of townships and counties here in the Washington, D.C., area. Spurred largely by the size and height of these "McMansions," we've had building moratoria and noteworthy dismissals of building department officials. It's nice to know someone cares.

But all the legislation in the world won't help regulate against bad taste or poor judgment. I recently toured a new speculative house in a pricey Washington suburb. Located within a top-rated school district, the house is on the market for \$1.7 million. It's a perfectly nice house, with a

reasonably modern floor plan and a pleasing elevation. The detached garage is at a polite remove from the house. And, you'll be happy to know, an architectural firm designed it. The firm does attractive work that's a notch up from the regular fare.

Of course, there's a punch line here. Approaching the house, I entered the brick front path on grade with the curb, walked a few feet, stepped down a few steps, continued a few strides more, then walked up a step to a brick landing, and then up another step to the brick-floored front porch. Across, down, across, up, and up again. Hmm. This is very odd, I thought. My suspicions were confirmed when I toured the first floor and basement. The family room and kitchen (which span the rear of the house) overlook a shallow backyard, but you have to go out a side door in the kitchen, down some stairs, and walk along the driveway to get to it. What, was this suddenly 1935? The basement was no better; just a basic egress stair there too. Obviously, this house, although handsome, was not designed for this site.

Eager to cram as much house as possible on this



Mark Robert Halper

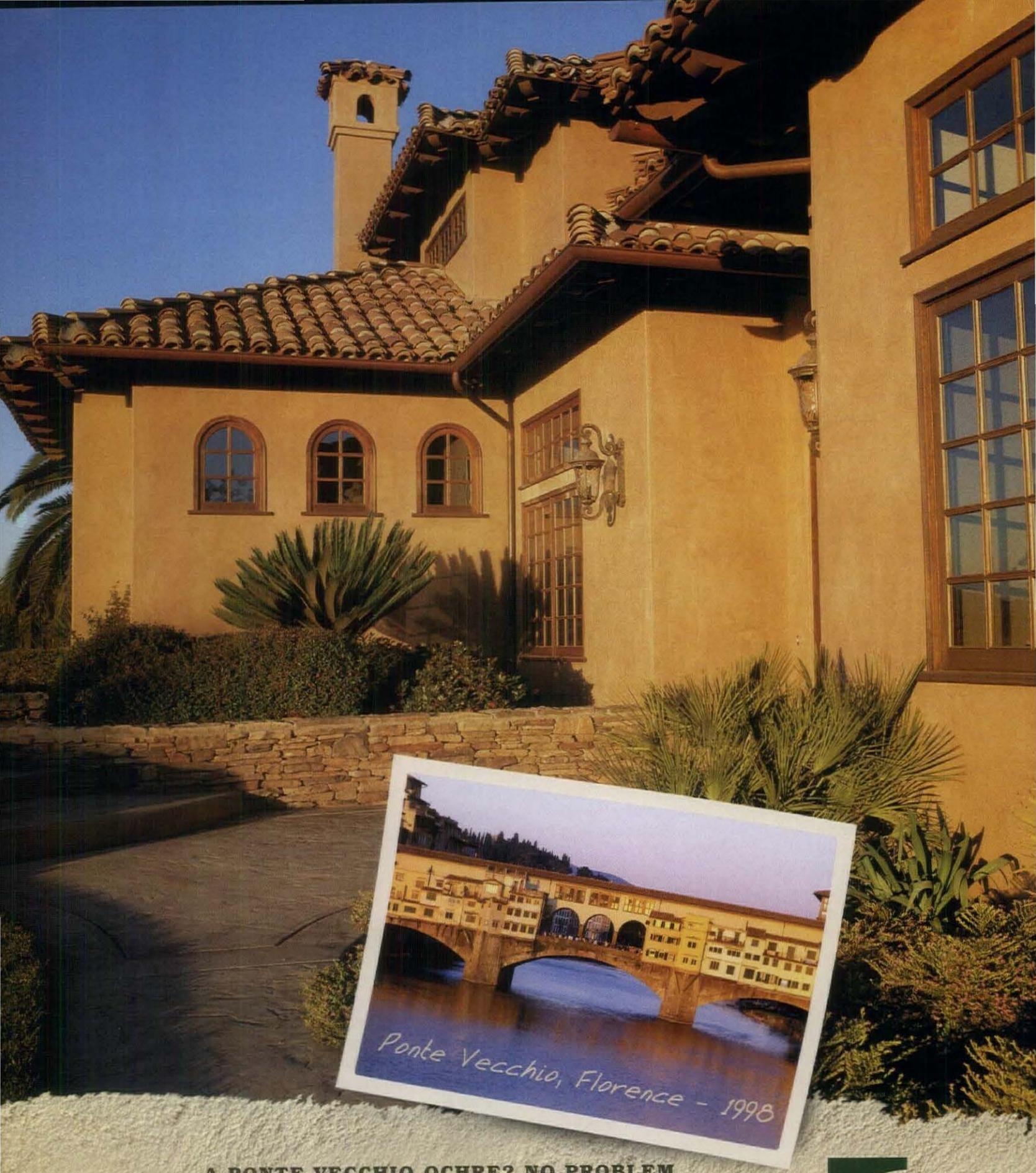
lot, the builder ran out of room for a rear deck or other tiered segue from the family room to the yard. And he didn't hire the plan architect to solve the problems for him. Suddenly, a perfectly nice house on paper becomes squandered potential on site.

A similar scenario is happening on a "custom" house project near me. The owner of a rare double lot in our older neighborhood bought an impressive, architect-designed house plan and hired a builder to execute it for him. Trouble is, the builder sited it on the flat, but low, spot of the sloped site. Guess no one was planning for a swimming pool in the basement.

We have to find ways

to deliver better-designed houses to more people at a more affordable price point. And plans have great potential. So do prefabricated houses. But as we run out of flat pads for such houses, we're faced with a grim truth: There are no shortcuts to fitting the house to the site. Architects can't forget this in their admirable rush to tackle the problem of mediocre market-rate housing. A better house is just half the battle. *ra*

Comments? Call: 202.736.3312; write: S. Claire Conroy, *residential architect*, One Thomas Circle, N.W., Suite 600, Washington, D.C. 20005; or e-mail: [cconroy@hanleywood.com](mailto:cconroy@hanleywood.com).



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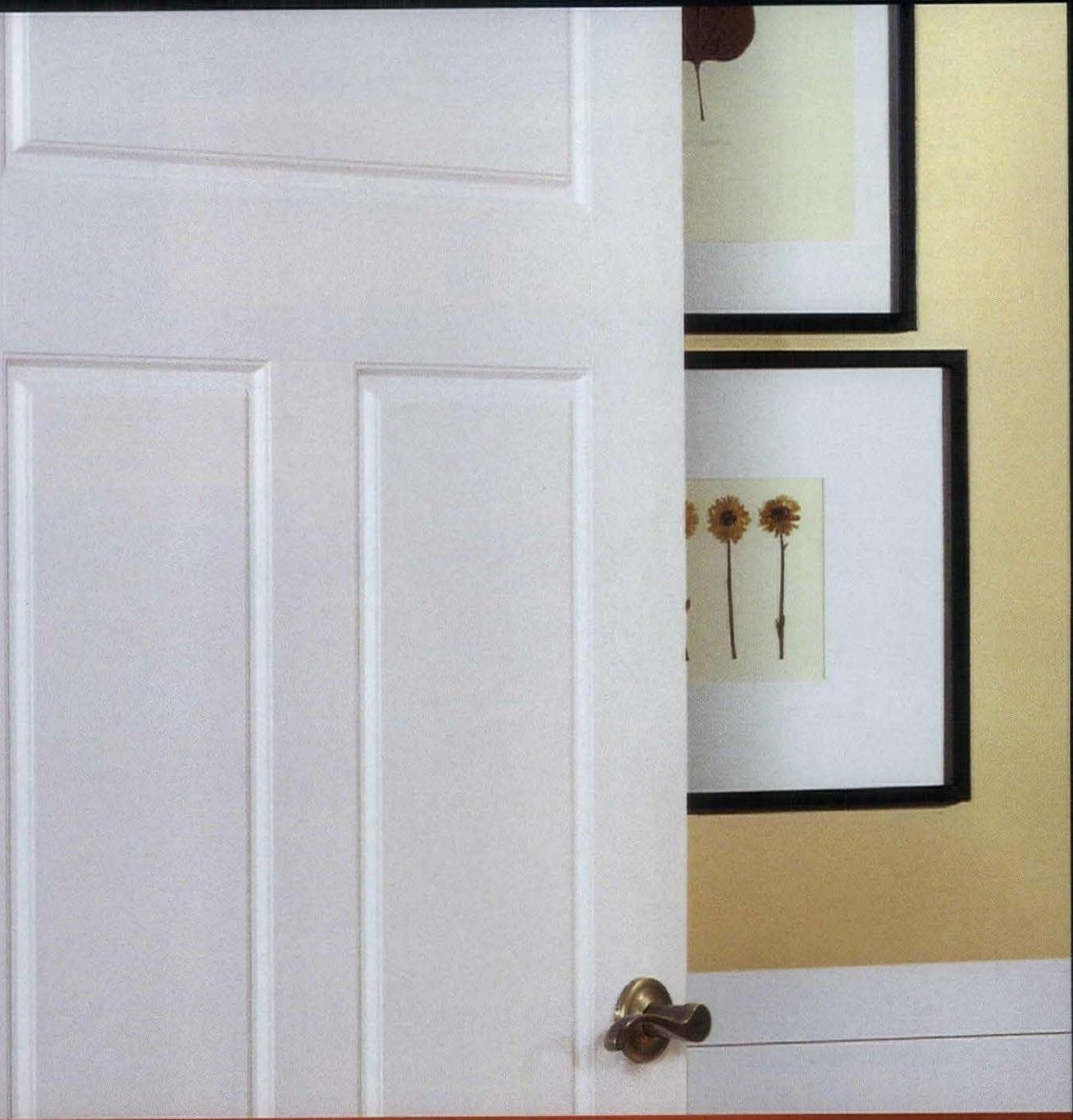
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# letters

exercise your right to write.

## money matters

**t**he query about why architects' fees vary so much is an excellent one (Letters, June 2006, page 17).

The short answer is simple: Architects generally charge for their efforts. An architect who charges \$10,000 to design a house is not going to put in the effort that an architect who charges \$50,000 would.

When our office works directly for a tract home builder, we provide appropriate construction documents for a \$500,000 home on five sheets of drawings. We provide no consultation on cabinetwork, finishes or colors, or architectural details. The builder picks and builds them the way he chooses. His choices are dictated by factors such as aesthetics, price, and how easy it is to build. For the same-priced house, designed for a homeowner who wants a unique, fully detailed house, we might have to provide 25 sheets of drawings to explain how to build the elements the owner wants customized. There might also be 100 hours of meetings involved and a full set of specifications (not just a materials list).

Just because an architectural idea is on paper doesn't mean it will be built exactly as drawn, however. Some

interpretation of the drawings is often involved to achieve what the owner and the architect had in mind. Extensive construction-observation services are intended to help a builder execute the design and to ensure that the client receives the house that was drawn. Without the architect's involvement during construction, the builder has to interpret the drawings himself, which can lead to misunderstandings and changes in the design, either intentionally or unintentionally.

Most architects are used to serving one type of client and tailor their services and fees accordingly. By visiting the projects of different architects—and looking to see how unique or custom their projects are—one can observe the level of control they provide. One can also compare their construction documents, to determine how extensive they are, and ask questions about what they draw and what they normally would expect the builder to do "without being told." A firm that expects the builder to fill in most of the design is going to seek a much smaller fee than an architect who designs every aspect of the project.

More effort equals more fees. But explaining where the effort goes—and how it

serves the owner—can raise a lot of questions.

*Tom Clark, CSI  
Thomas Clark Architects  
Baltimore*

## triple threat

keep seeing three topics discussed in the letters written to you and thought I should finally respond: compensation, passing the Architect Registration Exam (ARE), and the separation of residential and commercial architects.

Compensation, for me, means charging what I think my employees and I are worth. I charge strictly by the hour, as a considerable number of my projects are either renovations or historic preservations. To charge for those types of projects on a percentage basis would surely be death. I find that the hourly system works best for me, and my clients have a better understanding of how much the end cost will be. And yes, I do provide estimates when asked.

My feelings about passing the ARE are quite simple. The Intern Development Program is a bureaucratic jumble of red tape mainly concocted to take precious free time away from aspiring architects who are probably working tremendous amounts of overtime and barely have time to eat and sleep. Yes,

I did get through it. As for the exam: You are there only to answer as many questions correctly as is required to pass—just pass. When I exited the exam, I was certain I had failed three parts. Much to my surprise months later, I had passed all parts and was finally a registered architect. I didn't say I aced all of them.

As an architect who worked in the commercial arena for 17 years prior to moving to my hometown and going into residential practice, I clearly see the discrimination expressed by many of my colleagues in the commercial arena. I just smile and move on. I know who's having [fun] and making money.

*Stanley F. Smith, AIA  
Thomasville, Ga.*

## redlines

Johnson & Lee Architects/Planners' role in the Robert Taylor Homes project was understated in the August 2006 issue. The firm planned and designed 110 units adjacent to the Robert Taylor site, and Landon Bone Baker was invited to help plan and design about 40 percent of the 250-unit first phase of on-site housing.

*Letters may be edited for clarity and length.*

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# home front

news from the leading edge of residential design.

## chez boomers

We've heard a lot about baby boomers in the last decade or so, usually accompanied by phrases like "800-pound gorilla." No wonder experts have been analyzing the weighty impact of this group in all arenas of modern life.

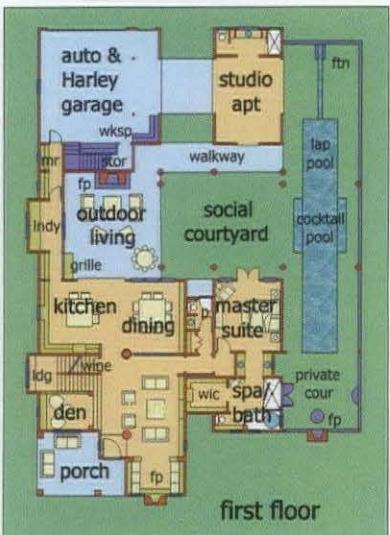
*residential architect* magazine's parent company, Hanley Wood, LLC, is no exception. As part of its annual American Housing Conference held last fall, the company commissioned research into the domestic likes, dislikes, and heartfelt desires of the baby boom's leading edge—the most affluent cohort turning 60. Based on the findings, *residential*

*architect invited two architecture firms to respond with concepts for a new boomer house and a remodeled house.*

Ed Binkley, AIA, National Design Director of BSB Design, took on the new prototype, and Dennis Wedlick, AIA, of Dennis Wedlick Architect LLC applied his vision to the revised house.

And what did these hypothetical clients want? A hodgepodge mix of selfless and selfish requirements. They want houses that are smaller, more luxurious, and high-tech; they want them more functional, lower-maintenance, and energy-efficient; they want a better connection to the outdoors and room to party with friends; they want to welcome their visiting children but not have them stay too long; they want

Binkley's concept house responds to boomers' requests for one-floor living, plenty of space for entertaining, and updated elevations.

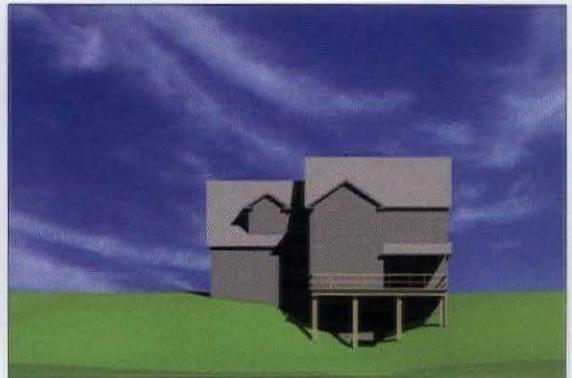
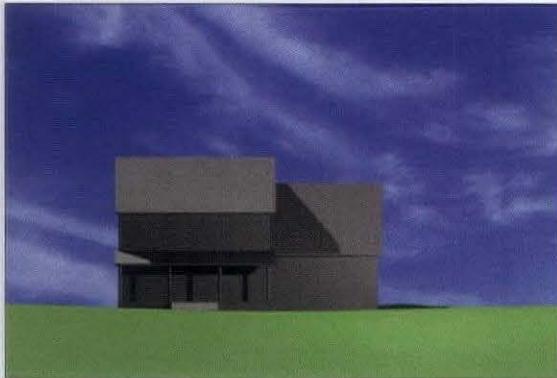


Renderings and floor plan (this page): Courtesy BSB Design





*"leading-edge boomers intend to put themselves first, and their homes will reflect that me-ism."*—from research conducted by DYG for Hanley Wood, LLC



space for their hobbies but not for their aged parents. They care about green design. They're tired of traditional architectural styles. They'd prefer a hardworking one-level



floor plan and universal design features so they can age in place. They expect to remain active and engaged in outdoor pursuits.

As Wedlick says, "They like to get muddy, so they need a mud room." Binkley's buyers "like a glass of chardonnay by the pool."

The leading edge of the baby boom is ready for the good life. And both Binkley's courtyard house and Wedlick's compound remodel provide it, with oasislike escapes from the outside world. Each house also has a smaller second level (not shown) with overflow room for visitors or hobbies. Together, both houses show how good design can grow with us, responding to our changing needs and desires.—*s. claire conroy*



Renditions and site plan (this page): Courtesy Dennis Wedlick Architect LLC



Wedlick's "remodeled" boomer house begins with a typical builder plan (top) and reconfigures it to create better function, a stronger connection to the outdoors, and improved curb appeal (above). The design team included Brian Marsh, AIA; Carol Gretter, AIA, LEED AP; George Jaramillo; and Patrick Fitzgerald.

## on the boards / skin deep

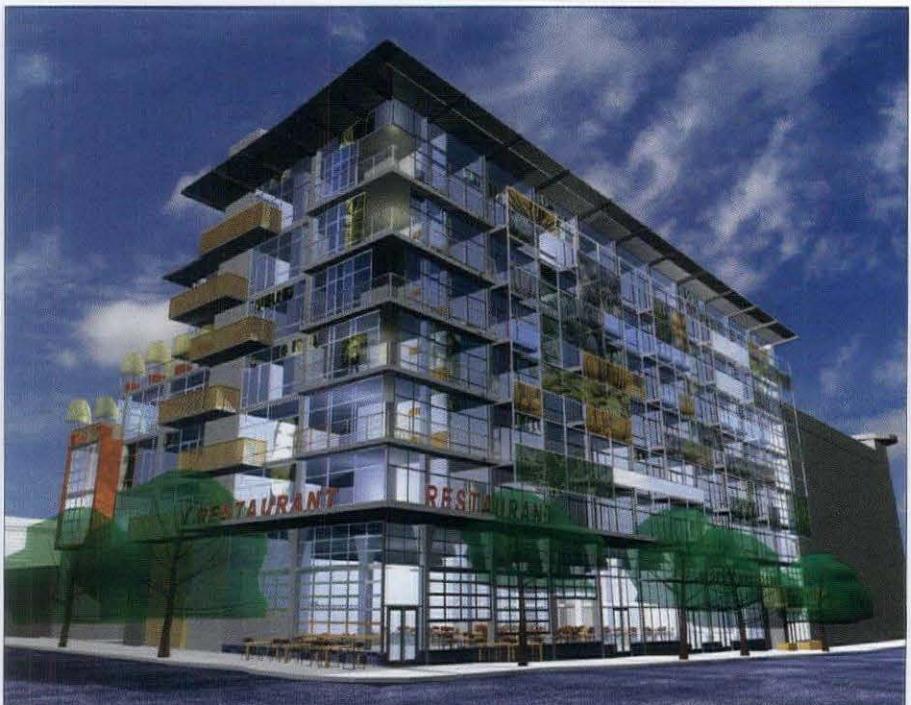
While architects Jim Brown, AIA, and Jim Gates specialize in designing buildings, they also enjoy creating and studying public art. Their appropriately named San Diego firm, Public, combines both disciplines at The Lofts at 655 Sixth Avenue, now under construction in the city's busy Gaslamp Quarter. A glass-and-aluminum skin projecting four feet out from the project's windowed west façade will act as both a sunscreen and a canvas for large-scale murals. "It became necessary to have something [for the sun] because the long exposure faces west," Brown says. "We also saw it as an art opportunity."

Public's concept calls for covering both the skin and the building itself in a translucent film imprinted with photographic images. The firm will select one artist to create two murals, with the idea that each set of images will play off the other in a way that will intrigue—and provoke reflection by—residents and passersby. The layered scheme adds a level of complexity to the building's otherwise straightforward elevations.

The Lofts' all-concrete structure will house 103 units, as well as underground parking and a ground-floor Portuguese restaurant.

Many of the units open out onto balconies; those on the northwest corner feature sliding glass doors that roll all the way back, opening the space up to the outdoors. The studio and one- and two-bedroom apartments (along with one three-bedroom unit) range in size from 400 square feet to 1,300 square feet and will rent for about \$1,250 to \$2,500 per month.

The project's eye-catching artwork will begin to fade after seven to 10 years, freeing developer OliverMcMillan to commission new murals. "The building will always be changing and current," Brown explains. It will evolve with the times, just like the city itself.—meghan drueding

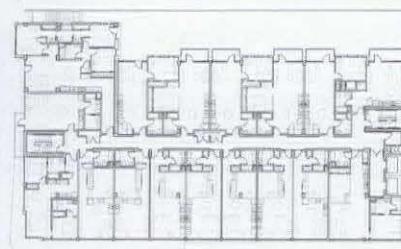


Rendings: Courtesy Public

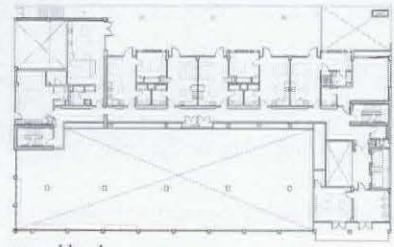


*"the building will always be changing and current."*

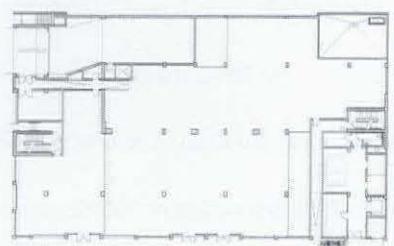
—jim brown, aia



third level



second level



first level



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## calendar

### american architecture awards 2007

entry deadline: february 1

The Chicago Athenaeum: Museum of Architecture and Design's American Architecture Awards honor excellence in U.S. commercial, corporate, institutional, and residential design. Entries can be built or unbuilt, but they must have been designed since January 1, 2005. Call 815.777.4444 for entry criteria, or apply online at [www.chi-athenaeum.org/archawards/sub00.htm](http://www.chi-athenaeum.org/archawards/sub00.htm).

### oma in beijing: china central television headquarters

through february 26  
the museum of modern art, new york city

The China Central Television Headquarters complex conceived by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture reimagines the classic skyscraper

and tailors it to a city replete with tall buildings and prone to seismic activity. Seen here in a rendering and scheduled to open for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the project comprises two buildings connected by a cantilevered canopy and a media park. The small- and large-scale models, renderings, and drawings featured in this installation illuminate the interplay of public and private spaces that characterize OMA's design approach. For more information, call 212.708.9400 or visit [www.moma.org](http://www.moma.org).

### skin + bones: parallel practices in fashion and architecture

through march 5  
the museum of contemporary art, los angeles

Fashion and architecture have much in common. The creative process that drives both disciplines begins with the human body (and its interaction with its environment) and ends with outward expressions of personal, political, and cultural identity. *Skin + Bones* examines the factors that shape design—material, proportion, and volume among them—and the ways in which the surface and the structural transcend their functions. Featured architects include Herzog & de Meuron and Shigeru Ban Architects, whose Curtain Wall House (Tokyo, 1995) is seen here. Call 213.626.6222 or visit [www.moca.org](http://www.moca.org) for museum hours.



Courtesy OMA



Hiroyuki Hira

### multicultural modernism: the work of steven ehrlich architects

through april 15  
palm springs (calif.) art museum

This retrospective exhibition explores the work of Steven Ehrlich, FAIA—and coincides with the release of his 27-year-old firm's fifth monograph,

*Steven Ehrlich Architects: Multicultural Modernism* (Images Publishing, 2006). Photographs, models, and drawings of many of the firm's projects, including the 700 Palms Residence (Venice, Calif., 2004) shown here, demonstrate Ehrlich's globally flexible design vision. Go to [www.psmuseum.org](http://www.psmuseum.org) or call 760.325.7186 for details.



Juergen Nogai and Julius Shulman

### building energy 2007

march 13–15  
seaport world trade center, boston

Organized by the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association, this annual conference and trade show attracts attendees who are committed to renewable energy and green building. This year's event, "Building for a Changing Climate," will present solutions for rehabilitating and retrofitting existing projects to make them more environmentally friendly; building science fundamentals; and new renewable energy technologies. More than 70 AIA-accredited workshops are scheduled. For seminar topics, visit [www.buildingenergy.nesea.org](http://www.buildingenergy.nesea.org).



### sft-architecture convention 2007

march 14–16  
convention center halle münsterland, münster, germany

More than 3,500 architects, engineers, and planners are expected to gather to discuss topics ranging from "architecture in the water" to "living and working in modules." The speaker roster includes Moshe Safdie, FRAIC, FAIA, and Ken Yeang, a Malaysian architect known for his environmental design solutions for high-rises. E-mail [info@sft-congress.de](mailto:info@sft-congress.de) or go to [www.sft-congress.de/eng](http://www.sft-congress.de/eng) for more information.

—marla misek

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# k + b studio

## kitchen: work in

**t**heo Adamstein and Olivia Demetriou, FAIA, are the go-to architects for designing chic new restaurants in Washington, D.C., and environs. Their success lies in organizing efficient kitchens while creating stylish, yet inviting, spaces for socializing and eating. The architectural couple recently domesticated their successful commercial formula and brought it home. "A kitchen's driven by function," Demetriou says, "but in today's home, you have to achieve those needs in ways that make the kitchen feel more like a public space than a workspace."

"What we learned in doing restaurant kitchens," she continues, "is that different zones are more distinctly defined, and that washing dishes has nothing to do with food prep." Thus, the dishwasher and big sink in their own kitchen are concealed beneath a dining room pass-through opposite the cooking zone. An adjacent column of cabinets keeps dishes and glassware centralized between eating and cleaning spots. Demetriou admits that the zone system does result in a few redundancies. The family of four has three refrigerators, for example. A small one near the toaster oven and coffee maker chills butter, milk, and juice in the breakfast zone. The main fridge stands within reach of the cooktop and a small produce sink; number three keeps soda and mixers cold at the beverage station.

A palette of light hues and natural materials soften the room's hardworking layout. "The lighting and finishes are as sensuous as the living spaces," Demetriou explains, "but at any time you can reach over and get what you need." One sumptuous material is the cream-colored concrete that tops counters and a spacious island. Not just for mincing garlic, the well-located island also hosts hors d'oeuvres and cocktails, kids doing homework, and the occasional science experiment. It also keeps guests out of the kitchen—sort of. "We can have 150 people over for a party and half of them hang out around the island," the architect (and hostess) says with a laugh.

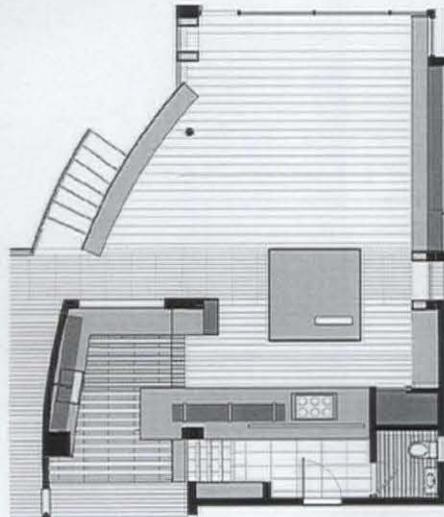
*project continued on page 32*



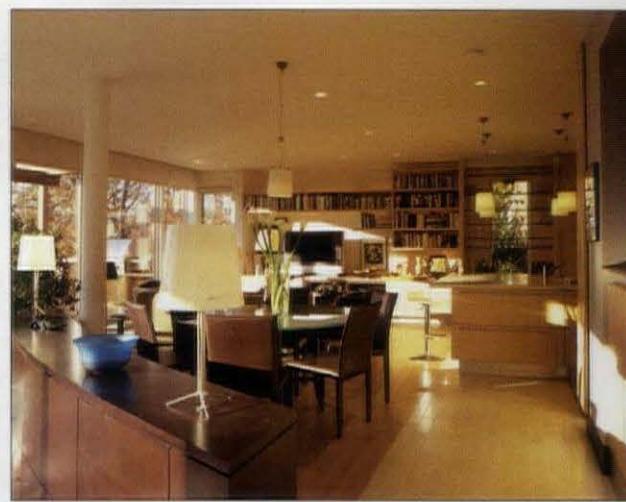
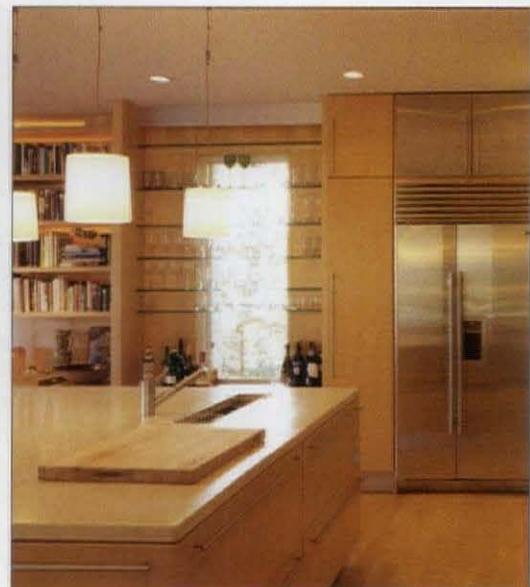


Photos: Max Hirshfeld

To flood the kitchen with natural light, the architects/owners replaced the back panels of stock cabinets with glass (above). Suspending the cabinets also increases light transmission and views.



The zone-driven layout invites interaction between the kitchen and living space (below).



**architect:** Adamstein & Demetriou Architects, Washington, D.C.

**general contractor:** Artwork Construction, Washington, D.C.

**structural engineer:** BEI Structural Engineers, Fairfax, Va.

**concrete fabricator:** Concrete Jungle, Inc., Frederick, Md.

**resources:** bath fittings and fixtures: Hansgrohe and Whirlpool; cooktop: Viking; kitchen cabinets: Art Craft Cabinets; oven: Miele; refrigerator: Sub-Zero; tile: Hastings Tile & Bath and Walker Zanger; vanity: Phoenix Wood Products Corp.



# k+b studio

## bath: work out

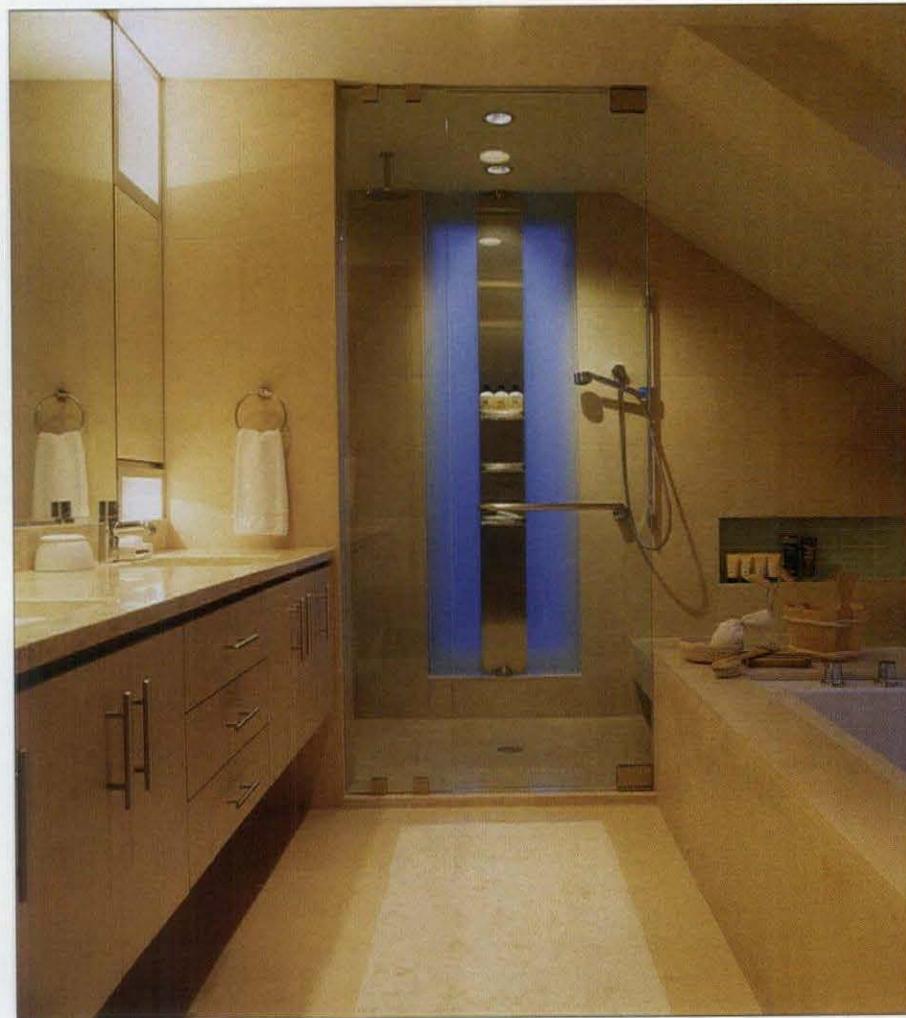
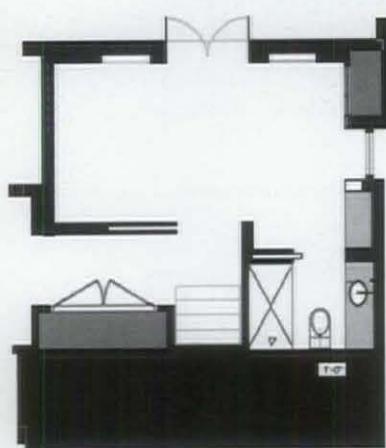
Incorporating commercial trends in the home kitchen is one thing, but Adamstein and Demetriou didn't stop there. "We were renovating our house at the same time that we developed a spa/gym concept called SomaFit," Demetriou says. Tired of running in different directions to exercise at the gym or to relax at the spa, the architects merged everything they needed into one spot—both for their commercial venture and for their own master bath.

A skylight angled to catch morning rays sends bathers a wake-up call, while an etched-glass wall between shower and master bedroom conveys the golden light of afternoon. Watery-green glass walls, beige limestone tiles, and a cream travertine counter establish a soothing tone for long soaks or a refreshing rinse under a rainfall showerhead.

"We're advocates of warm, comfortable spaces," Demetriou says, "and we feel contemporary design can achieve that through lighting and material palette."

Corraling toiletries into tidy niches quiets the visual noise, and a floating vanity with mirrored cabinets above keeps other necessities out of sight. It is, says Demetriou, "a

sculpted space with an evocative atmosphere."—shelley d. hutchins



Soothing horizontal lines frame the bath's skylight and long, deep storage areas.

Photos: Max Hirshfeld (top); courtesy Adamstein & Demetriou Architects (above)



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# the urban window

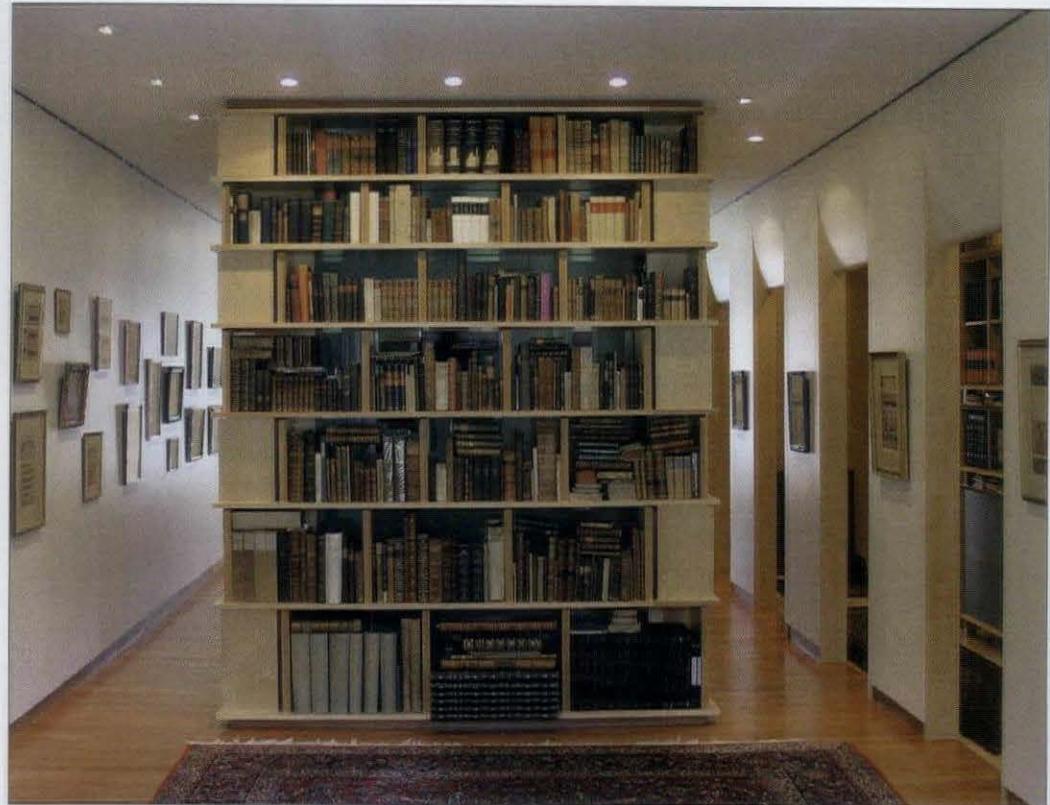
working within city limits, contemporary designers devise a fresh response to context.

by hansy better barraza

**a**s architects and designers, we are constantly dealing with the relationship between inside and outside and the way in which this relationship affects inhabitants' perceptions of place. The outside is usually referred to as something that is "other," exterior, or perhaps understood as the context. The modernist movement taught us that the relationship between inside and outside is to be seamless and intimately related.

For Le Corbusier, the horizontal window became the modernist paradigm. It was similar to the aspect ratio of the camera—the mechanized eye extending its view to the horizon. The window floated, removing itself from the specificity of a site, yet registering a universal horizon line and allowing for the outside to become part of each room. Le Corbusier believed in the sublime bucolic landscape—the building as an autonomous object divorced from its context, yet always reinscribing itself within a context.

For other canonical figures, such as Auguste Perret, the window took on a functional role as its dimensions and orientation were compared



Photos: Dan Bibb, courtesy Office dA



to that of a human figure. The vertical window was more in proportion with the human body; it dealt with the evolution of the body in the vertical stance. The window began to take on a literary figure; it was in dialogue with human growth.

The bookshelf core of a townhouse renovation by Boston firm Office dA provides a permeable, skylit divider of spaces, acting more as an interior window than a full-scale wall.

And finally, in Adolf Loos' domestic interiority, the window functioned purely to control light and create atmosphere. This was in contrast to the window as it controlled the gaze, as argued by Le Corbusier. Loos embedded the window with a completely different function. For him, the window was never meant to look outward; it was a purely introverted element. In Loos' interiors, the windows were often "decorated" with fabric (although he never would have admitted to decorating

anything, I'm sure). They performed much as walls do, removing any view of the urban context and internalizing the social domestic interior. The urban context for Loos was not something to be controlled and framed by a window. For him, the urban environment was seen as chaotic and as something from which the inhabitant needed to be protected.

## case study

So why all this about windows? These very different

*continued on page 38*

ideas about the role of the window have come to inform how architects use apertures, frames, and light to mediate between spaces. We can be opportunistic in the way we deploy these devices to create a wealth of experiences for the people we serve.

I'd like to expand upon some of these ideas by looking at a Victorian row house renovation in Boston's Back Bay by Office dA, a Boston-based architectural firm. In a spirit similar to Loos' work, the project has an interior conceived as a container of events. The neighborhood is a series of densely packed row houses developed in the 1800s. It contains great examples of diverse architectural styles and is one of Boston's premier residential districts.

Working under Back Bay historic preservation guidelines, Office dA principals Monica Ponce de Leon and Nader Tehrani poetically bridge the urban dweller from this frozen historic context into a completely new environment.

The clients collect manuscripts and rare books—an activity that inspired the organization of the new spaces. The 6,300-square-foot house has a very deep bay structure whose frontal and rear elevations provide

the only direct access to light. Office dA responded to the compact urban site by removing interior wall partitions and centralizing many of the home's functions (bathrooms, circulation, and storage) within a central core enclosed by porous bookshelves and latticed screens. The core is coupled with a skylight, allowing for light to filter through and along the vertical stack. This aperture/railing/shelving system is experienced from every level of the residence as a series of open bookcase structures dispersed and unraveled vertically through all five stories.

Like the early 1960s' Situationist quest for mapping techniques to begin to understand the complexities of the urban fabric, Office dA employs a version of Situationist detailing in which transitions between spaces are highly complex, responding to intimate and subtle changes in use, movement, and mode of occupation by the inhabitants. We see these variations expressed in the handrails, door headers, and book frames, each of which

*"office dA's performative surfaces behave much like windows."*



Jared Leeds



Dan Bibb, courtesy Office dA

responds to the way one experiences that particular threshold.

### performance art

Office dA's performative surfaces, such as the core's porous book walls and screens, behave much like windows. They extend the human body outside of its frame to enjoy new processes and experiences. The architecture is no longer passive, standing still as a backdrop, but instead serves the users and engages them through visual and physical cues. The dweller is both reader and author.

With this active core, Office dA challenges the domestic categorical division of "room" and invites one to participate in the architecture. The house contextualizes itself from within, responding to its own interior architecture and functionality. Instead of the street elevations talking to one another, the arrangement of spaces within the house sets up an internal dialogue.

The bookcase structure travels vertically through the home's five levels, defining different spaces on each floor.

Unlike the modernist godfathers' interpretation of aperture, this version of an urban "window" is not dogmatically determining one system over another, regardless of time, age, and use. Instead, Office dA's performative design and Situationist detailing communicate an understanding of different interpretations of program, aperture, and window through an expanding definition of interiority. They also emphasize the importance of program when working within an insular external context. Working within a historical context is not so much about correctness or appropriateness, but about making complex performances that respond directly or indirectly to the outside environment. *ra*

*Hansy Better Barraza is an assistant professor of architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design and a principal of Studio Luz Architects in Boston.*

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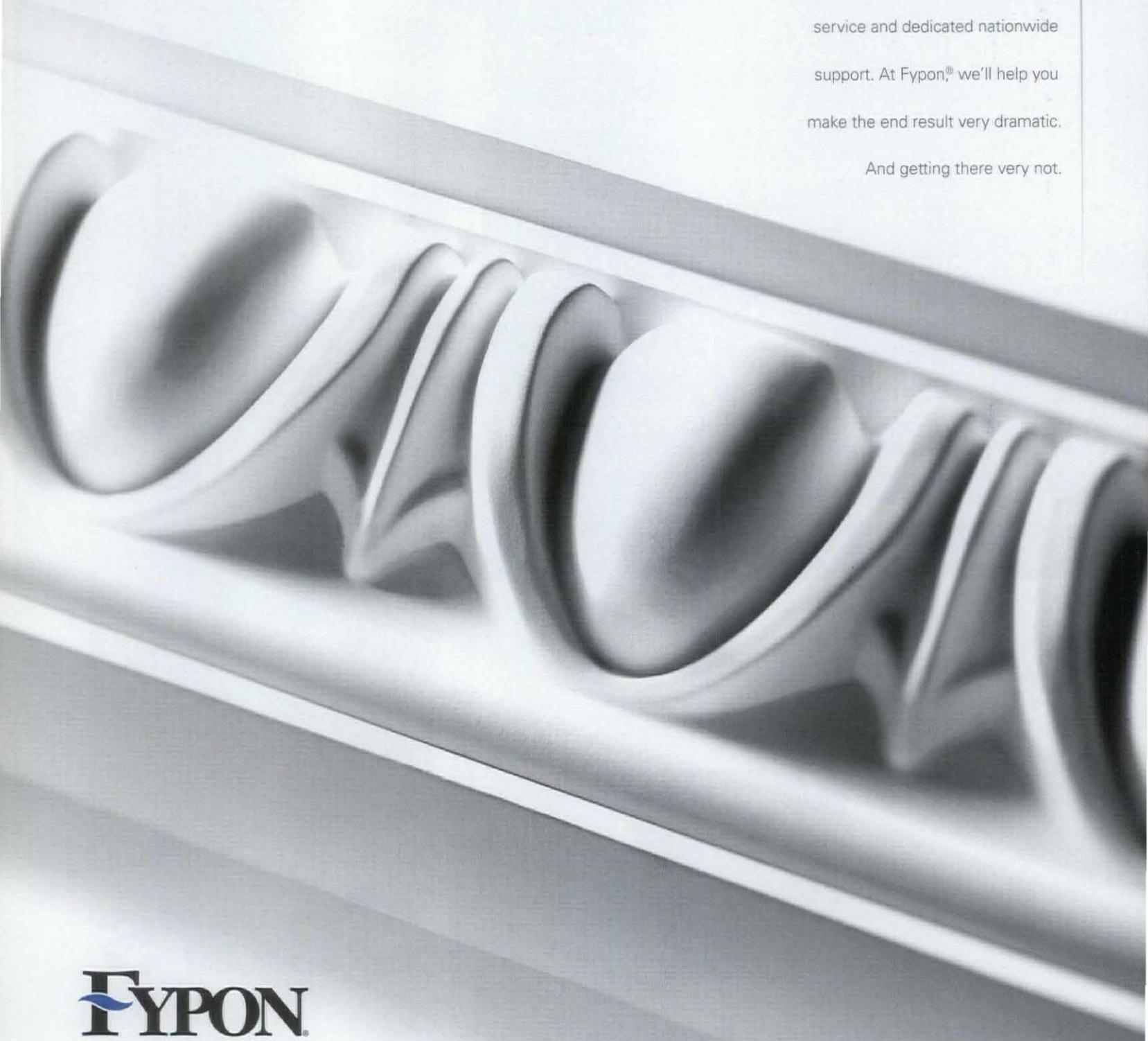
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practice

# on thin ice?

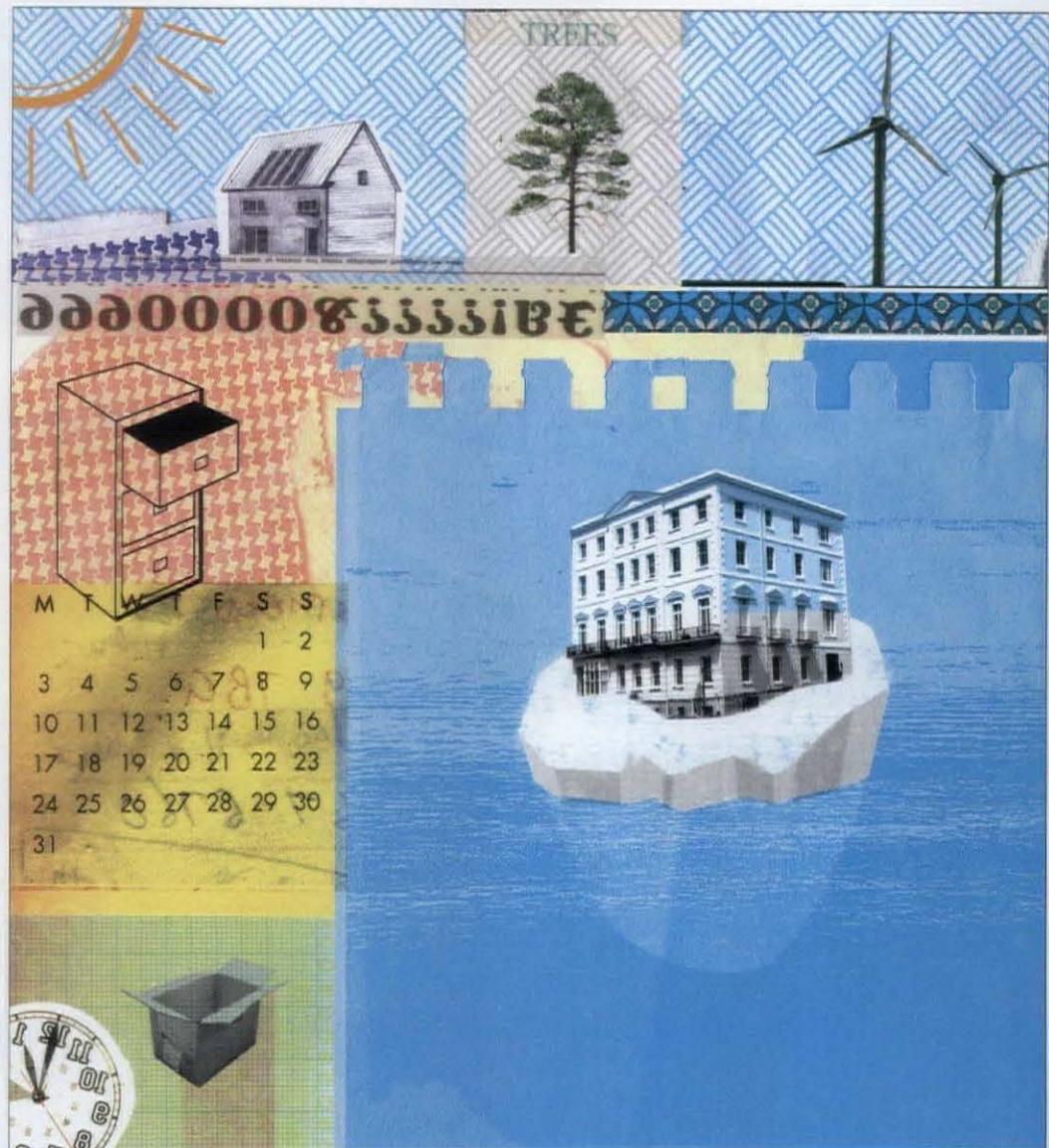
as the housing market teeters on the brink, architects adjust their game plan.

by cheryl weber

It's been a little over a year since the housing market hit the skids. The U.S. Census Bureau marked November 2005 as the beginning of the slide, and throughout 2006 new-home sales steadily lost ground, dropping about 20 percent nationwide. Toward the end of 2006, inventories were up an alarming 35 percent from the previous year as short-term investors rushed for the exits. Although interest rates have plateaued and the economy remains healthy, we've yet to see whether the landing will be hard, soft, or somewhere in between.

It took the big national builders a little too long to realize the party was winding down. Panic-stricken, they are putting on the brakes, dumping land, postponing planned subdivisions, and offering buyer incentives. Architects have cause for concern too. Falling existing-home values have taken consumers hostage psychologically as they wait for the market to bottom out. And it means less equity for owners who want to trade up to their dream home.

But there is an upside to this inevitable downdraft. Thankfully, the real estate market has rid itself of house-flippers seeking a quick



Stanley Hooper

profit. Gone, too, is the frenzy that turned buying and selling into a competitive sport—and the irritating subject of every dinner-party conversation. It's a relief for middle-income Americans who are being priced out of their neighborhoods. And a saturated market means the cost of building materials will likely

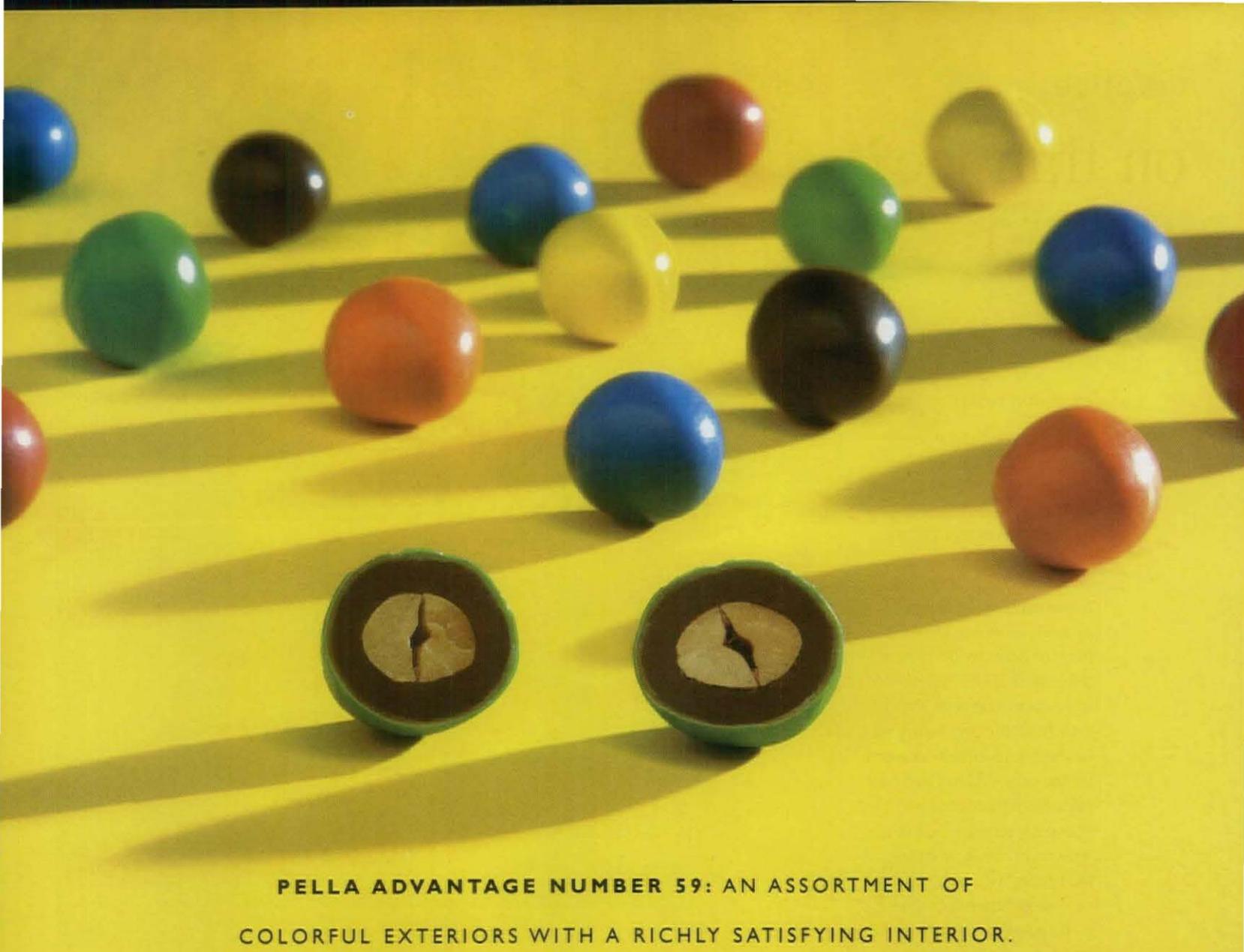
come down. Frankly, some calm is welcome.

"It's a strange downturn," says Chris Lessard, AIA, founding principal and CEO of Lessard Group, Vienna, Va. "Everyone is so calm. The reason is that the demographics are overwhelmingly in favor of housing demand, and the numbers on job creation are promising. The

price is the problem. We know the market is there, but we have to adjust our pricing."

True, this housing downturn differs from those of the early 1980s and '90s in that it doesn't coincide with a recession. As a result, custom-home architects are reporting only a slight decrease in leads. But while the softening

*continued on page 45*



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housing market doesn't have most architects scrambling for work, there's been a palpable shift in thinking, particularly among production and multi-family practices.

## inside the box

For BSB Design, the housing downturn is a two-part opportunity. National design director Ed Binkley, AIA, who's based in the firm's Orlando, Fla., office, says some of the big national builders in Orlando have stopped projects for which they'd already had site plans approved. They're selling off those properties and sitting tight. But large local builders are snapping them up, and that's created a whole new market for fast-tracked design. "The local builders don't have anything designed that fits these properties," Binkley explains. "There's been this hurry-up process to get something designed and into the system quickly. That's happening in our offices across the country." BSB is in the midst of charrettes, sending out architects for several days at a time to quickly design handfuls of single-family spec homes. These builders are girding for an uptick in activity toward the end of 2007, hoping that strong job and population growth will have soaked up the surplus inventory by then.

The other good news is that, with the slam-dunk days on the wane, BSB finally has time to address some systemic housing problems that were ignored during the run-up. "We're

## crystal ball

**m**ark M. Zandi, Ph.D., an economist and co-founder of Moody's Economy.com, mapped out the probable road ahead at a National Association of Home Builders construction forecast conference last fall. The upshot? The worst is almost over. Although the housing market will continue to decline over the next six months, a bottom is in sight.

He cautions, however, that the recovery will depend on how quickly builders can rein in construction and how quickly homes become affordable. That caveat includes the expectation that the economy will continue to grow, and that there will be no further interest rate increases throughout 2007. Even a small rise, he believes, would be hard for the market to bear.

Zandi wrote of another scary possibility in "Housing from Boom to Bust," a Moody's Economy.com paper published last August. "The housing correction threatens to unravel into a crash if the job market does not hold up as well as expected," he reports. "Given that housing-related industries now account for such a large share of jobs and an even larger share of job growth, this is a measurable risk." —c.w.

in that time frame now where we have a chance to stop to look at how we'll address housing two to five years from now," Binkley says. "To me, it's almost a welcome relief." With the median U.S. home price hovering above \$200,000, at the top of BSB's list is how to make workforce housing feel as special as the million-dollar homes. "We've got this theory that we've been thinking outside the box; now we need to think inside the box," Binkley says. For example, the firm is doing research and development on various house types starting at 16 feet wide and increasing in eight-foot increments. It's also working on three-story townhouses with a ground-floor garage

and second and third floors that are interchangeable, depending on the views and communities. "We've gotten into this thinking that a bigger house is better, because the cost per square foot to build it goes down," he continues. "Now it's about being respectful of the way we live and use the house, which saves materials and waste."

Inevitably, this little trough is also giving architects a chance to push the builder boundaries on sustainable design. Consumers are clamoring for it now, but builders worry about how going green will affect the bottom line. "There have been so many misconceptions about what it means to the price of housing," Binkley

*continued on page 46*



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says. "We're trying to take baby steps on things like carpets and paints and HVAC systems—things that fall in line with normal practice—and before they realize it, they have a green house. As builders begin to understand they can do this, they're buying into it, but it takes a real education on our end."

Lessard Group has become more proactive during the lull too. Until recently, builders were asking for big houses, knowing they could get top dollar per square foot. Now, in response to stratospheric land and construction costs, they're readjusting to meet a price point people can afford. In response, architects have gone back to the drawing board

—reengineering structural framing to reduce the use of steel and concrete on condos, creating more disciplined floor plans, and developing pro formas for builders based on these ideas. "We're coming to them with solutions," Lessard says. With the growing demand for apartment buildings, some of his clients are renegotiating land contracts to make the numbers work for rental properties. However, because condos are a more lucrative project type for builders, Lessard is experimenting with cost-saving tricks like wood construction and pushing buildings farther out of the ground to avoid the expense of constructing underground parking. He

believes the market will be better off for some of these emerging changes. "In freewheeling times we tended to design and then value-engineer later," he says. "Now we're picking the structural system first and organizing around it. When you're not disciplined, you're not doing anyone a favor."

On the West Coast, Seattle has one of the strongest housing markets in the United States, but even it's starting to lose steam as inventories of unsold homes rise. At the end of 2006, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that the median home price in Seattle was up 9.4 percent from a year earlier—the first time in two years that increases

haven't reached double digits. Still, Bellevue, Wash.-based Milbrandt Architects hasn't felt so much as a pinch. That's partly because the firm, whose clients include Centex Homes and Polygon Northwest Co., takes on a diversified blend of single-family, rental, and condo projects. "The statistical information we've heard recently is that the price increases are slowing down, but we haven't had any backing off of price appreciation here at all," says principal Leonard Milbrandt, AIA.

The swift run-up in home prices has come back to bite developers of single-family homes, however, and the plunge in affordability is driving a shift in project type.



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With apartment rental fees creeping up as the rent/buy gap widens, Milbrandt says his clients are moving more heavily toward rental products. But they're also in sync with the national trend toward reducing the size of for-sale products to scoop up entry-level buyers. Seattle-area developers are also pushing density to save land costs.

"There's been a little bit of leveling out of the housing market here," agrees Bill Kreager, FAIA, a principal at Seattle-based Mithun. "It's growing at a reasonable, but more conservative, rate." Prices, however, are "horrible," he adds. With the median price of a detached home there just under \$400,000, the condo market is billowing.

Mithun has 8,000 units in the pipeline for downtown Seattle. Although the business plan is a mix of everything except hospitals, housing has always been its strongest segment—from HOPE VI to high-end. That's still true, and Kreager believes it's because of a decision Mithun made not to do sprawl. Returning from a U.S. Green Building Council conference three years ago, Kreager laid down the law: The firm would no longer accept projects with less than eight units per acre. "People are seeking us out because of what we are doing, and we're still turning work away," he says, adding that the firm's focus on green design is a double whammy in its favor.

With 68 percent of its 200-some employees LEED-certified, "We have been able to pick and choose those builders who are really excited about sustainability," he says. **a conservative approach** Multifamily firms are following the lead of their developer clients and proceeding with caution. Steven Kodama, FAIA, principal of Kodama Diseño Architects, San Francisco, notes that non-profit developers seem to be very, very busy. Kodama Diseño is working on a 100-unit affordable seniors project that is going full speed ahead. Other large projects on tap include \$250-per-square-foot mid-

rise condos in Richmond and Oakland, Calif. "By the time we're involved, there's a certain amount of commitment already made by developers in going through the entitlement process, but they are concerned about cost and what market they may be hitting," Kodama says. "They seem a little bit more conservative." He's seen no signs of slowdown, and although the firm is overloaded with work, he's reluctant to expand the payroll. "Looking to the future, we're reading our clients," he says. "If they're cautious, we won't overextend ourselves. We're in need of help but are not going beyond the immediate staffing."

*continued on page 48*



# to toe.

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Multifamily architects in East Coast cities seem to be landing on their feet too. Hickok Cole Architects, Washington, D.C., specializes in infill condos. None of its clients have switched to

apartment buildings, nor have they pulled the plug on any jobs. "Our clients are gauging the market but not shutting anything down," says principal Michael E. Hickok, AIA. "We still have

people calling and asking for feasibility studies, and as long as we have those in the pipeline, a certain number of them are likely to turn into real projects. Even if things do slow down,

we think the D.C. market is just generally so strong that it won't hurt us too badly."

Even as homes in suburban areas languish, demand for urban dwellings appears to know no bounds. In Atlanta, for example, outlying areas have felt the downturn, but for Surber Barber Choate & Hertlein Architects, it's pretty much been business as usual. Principal Dennis Hertlein, AIA, notes that some developers are trying to pro forma their deals to cover condos or rentals, bracing for the worst-case scenario. But the nervousness abated somewhat as interest rates leveled off recently. For now, Hertlein is sanguine about the bubble, at least with regard to multifamily housing. "Traveling around, I definitely see the inner-city movement still strong," he says. "Empty-nesters and first-time buyers are focusing on that aggressively." He's noticed, however, that financing is getting tighter. "We're starting to see, for the first time in 10 years, presales being required for certain projects, which changes the paradigm a little," he says.

### bang for the buck

For custom architects, the stagnant resale market is a drag on new business; let's face it, this isn't the best time to cash out an existing home. Orlando is one of those regions where builders put up too many houses, and when interest rates rose slightly, speculators went scurrying. Orlando architect

*continued on page 50*

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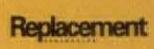
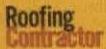
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John Henry, AIA, NCARB, says existing home sales are down 34 percent from a year ago, and that the 2005 hurricanes compounded the downturn. Homeowner insurance rates tripled over the year before, he adds, and some people who wanted to build custom are buying and remodeling existing homes.

Of course, Florida's four coastlines will always draw monied clients. "You can't compete with builders doing semicustom work," Henry says of his focus on the luxury custom home market. Even if local conditions tank temporarily, he expects to stay afloat because 80 percent of his work is out-of-state or overseas. Still, he's upbeat about Orlando's state of

affairs. "My peers locally are saying they feel the slowdown," he says, "but they don't feel like everything is going to hell in a handbasket."

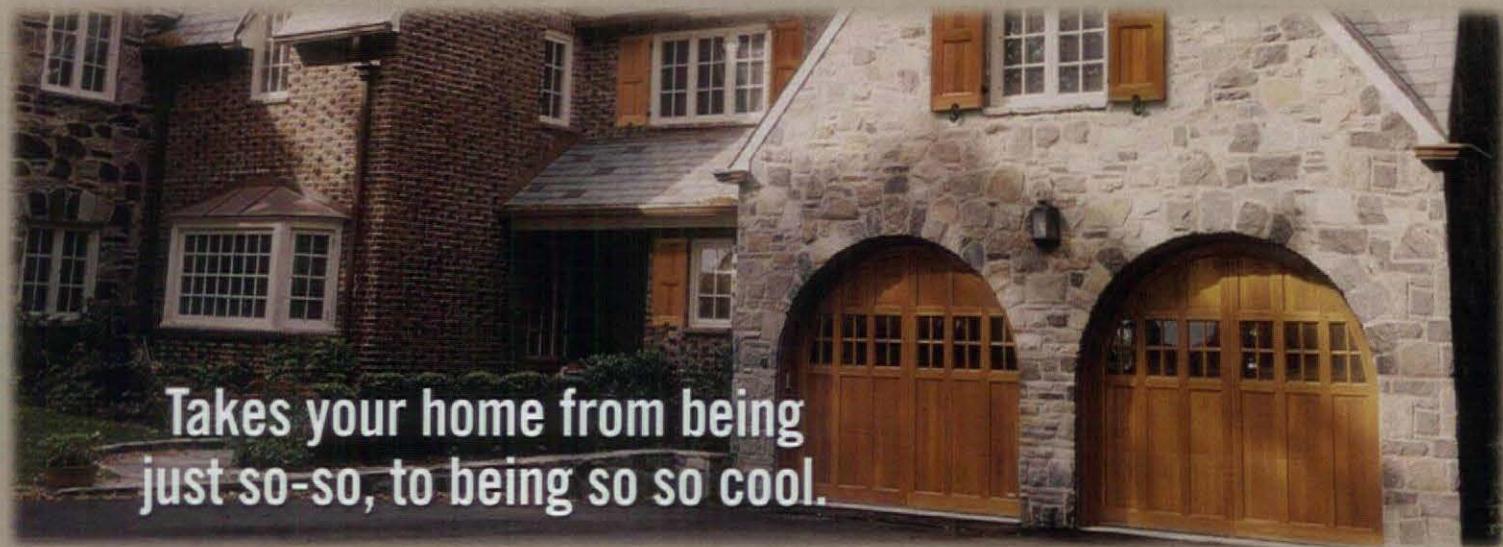
The housing market may not be going to hell, but one gets the feeling that the shakedown is creating a national shape shift in both local demographics and domesticity as Americans go in search of equilibrium. Henry notes that many Floridians are decamping to North Carolina, where home prices are generally more moderate. Austin, Texas, architects are faring well, too, thanks in part to an influx of Californians fleeing an impossible real estate market. "They come

in and think nothing of spending quite a bit more per square foot than people here are used to," says Heather McKinney, AIA. The push toward downtown living is also generating business. "There are more than a dozen residential and mixed-use projects in construction," she says. "There are cranes everywhere."

If anything, the current crisis is prompting a harder look at how and where we live. Recently, several production builders contacted Minneapolis architect Sarah Nettleton, AIA, LEED AP, to start a conversation about how to do things differently. "They're saying they want a new way of thinking about things to differentiate them-

selves, and they're scratching their heads about what should change," says Nettleton, whose book, *The Simple Home: The Luxury of Enough* (The Taunton Press), will be published in February.

Meanwhile, Mark A. Silva, AIA, principal of Silva Studios Architecture, San Diego, sees the downturn fueling interest in sustainable measures like solar power, rainwater collection, and smart technology. "It boils down to getting the biggest bang for your buck," he says. "People are starting to understand that it's worth it to pay for good design." He adds, "I've had longer waiting lists, but there are a couple of projects waiting for me now. I'm not too worried." **ra**



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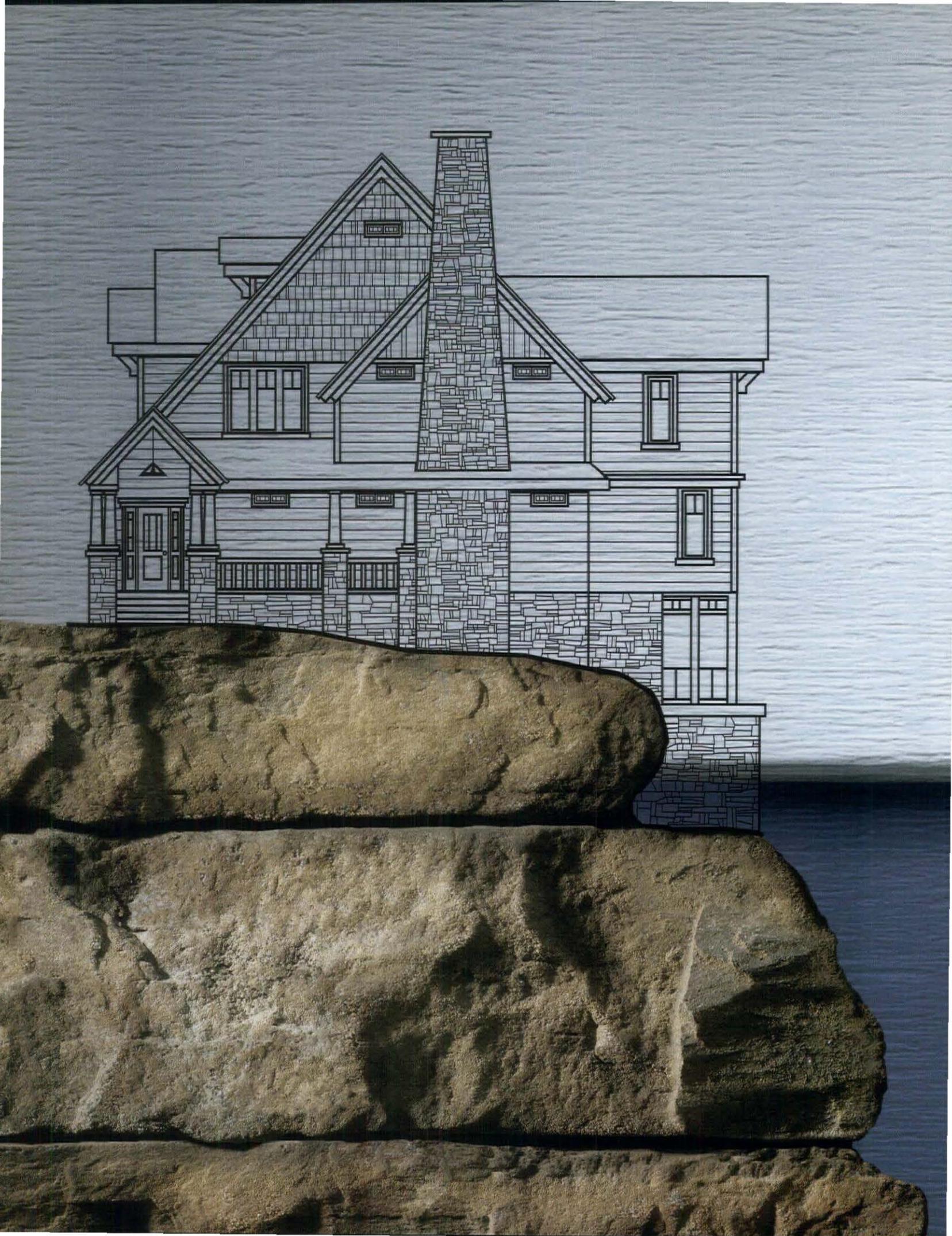


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# man about



# town

alexander gorlin reaches across stylistic divides to bring sumptuous modernism to urban dwellings.

by cheryl weber

**A**lexander Gorlin, FAIA, is a multifaceted architect with a range that has taken him from classical country villas to modernist urban houses, from affordable housing to luxury high-rises and on to offices, schools, synagogues—even to whimsical guard booths and a grand piano or two. His client mix is equally eclectic. In 2004 Gorlin designed Daniel and Nina Libeskind's 2,200-square-foot TriBeCa loft in New York City, five blocks from where the Twin Towers once stood. A year earlier, a commission from New Urbanists Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co. resulted in the 12-story Gorlin Tower at Aqua in Miami Beach, Fla. And the nonprofit developers of the Nehemiah Spring Creek Houses at Gateway Estates in Brooklyn, N.Y., recently broke ground on 117 row houses that Gorlin designed. The brightly colored homes will be modestly priced from \$158,300 to \$480,000.

"I'm easily bored," Gorlin says by way of explanation. "I think one's practice should reflect the mix of society at large. To limit yourself in what you do is unnecessary, and in a way, I think your work can become less interesting."

It's a statement architects often make, but in Gorlin's case, it seems rooted in a generosity of spirit that transcends mere ambition. Born in Queens, N.Y., and educated at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art and at Yale University, Gorlin is polite, friendly, and unassuming, with an open-minded optimism that makes him extremely likable. His SoHo office is a large, utilitarian room filled with 15 employees, cardboard models, and walls of books used to research ideas for the work at hand. Gorlin is a rigorous student of history—his Cooper thesis reconstructed the Jerusalem Temple from biblical texts and placed it in New York City's Union Square, on axis with the subway lines along Broadway—yet his work has good-naturedly resisted typecasting. For him, history is just a means to an end. "You can't compete with Michelangelo," he says. "The most meaningful way an architect can connect with history is to make it somehow his own."

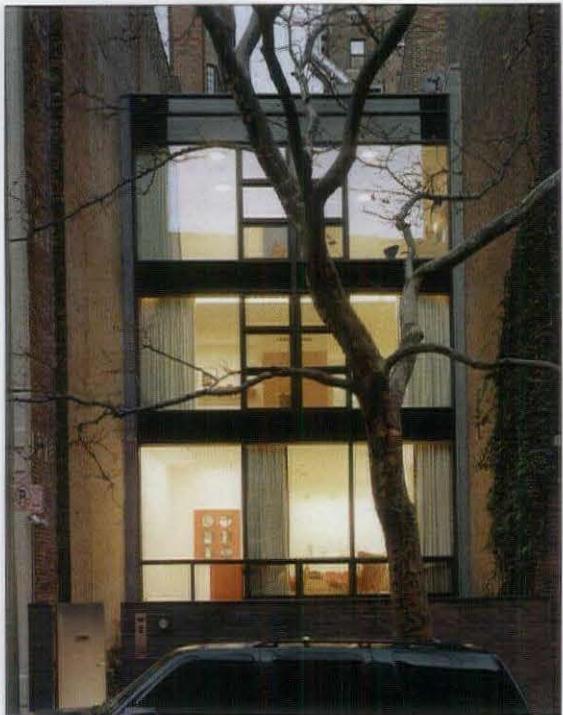
Alexander Gorlin turns townhouses into airy, light-filled sanctuaries. A media room (opposite) on the added third story of a 1958 Manhattan townhouse opens to a terrace on one side and an atrium on another.



Bill Cramer/Wonderful Machine

# man about town

*"i think one's practice should reflect the mix of society at large. to limit yourself is unnecessary, and in a way, i think your work can become less interesting."* —alexander gorlin, faia



The 1958 townhouse's 25-foot setback inspired Gorlin to create a stone-and-moss vestibule garden behind the low entry wall, like an "air lock" that dissolves the stress of the city street (above). Curtain walls flood the kitchen, dining, and living areas with natural light.



Photos: Peter Aaron/Esto

That's why Gorlin deliberately courts clients who are enthusiastic about making something unusual, like the urbane Chicago bachelor for whom he designed a theatrical townhouse. As is his custom, Gorlin dreamed up a narrative for the house, designing an all-white, glowing cube as the ultimate James Bond pad. "It's like a dating service," he says of the architect-client match. "Clients should themselves be creative, and it's better if they're fun to work with and have a sense of humor." Listening to him talk, he seems buoyed not just by a desire to stand out, but by an urge to design buildings that are genuinely joyful.

### urbane infill

As free-ranging as his work is, Gorlin is the go-to guy for urban dwellings. Townhouses, in particular, have been a focus of his considerable energies in recent years, resulting in two books: *The New American Town House* (Rizzoli, 1999) and *Creating the New American Town House* (Rizzoli, 2005).

Gorlin became interested in this narrow, vertical house type through his work at Seaside, Fla., in the early 1990s, where he designed a cluster of townhouses facing Ruskin Place, the town's central square. Ever the scholar, he began mining history for inspiration. How had city houses, with their blinkerlike parallel walls, evolved to overcome the challenges of lighting, construction, and circulation? What, he wondered, does it mean to do something modern with a house type that has been around for thousands of years? Or, in the case at Seaside, within the constraints of a TND?

Gorlin's research showed that the noteworthy architecture emerging in the early part of the last century was not a rejection of tradition but an abstraction of classical ideas, such as the Roman peristyle garden reinterpreted as a double-height, light-filled atrium. Those ancient courtyard gardens were, he wrote in *The New American Town House*, "the ultimate focus of the house, completing the metaphorical transition from the city to the countryside in an architecturally rich setting of modulated light and shadow."

Moving forward in time, 17th- and 18th-century Parisian townhouses also caught his eye. Although their façades were typically one undivided volume that respected the street, in plan all hell broke loose. They had a relaxed lightness that came from playful asymmetries—ideas, he says, that Le Corbusier expanded on in the 1920s, when the introduction of steel and reinforced concrete offered up new ways to configure space. "As opposed to the limitations of pattern-book places like Disney's Celebration" in central Florida, Gorlin concluded, "the lessons of the development of Paris, London, and New York demonstrate that urban codes and rules have absorbed and encouraged innovation in the creation of the city."

What Gorlin finally decided was that a row house's style is less important than whether it speaks the street language. And that's what he set out to prove in 1994 with his own modernist Seaside townhouse—the last one he designed on Ruskin Place, and a deliberate departure from the classically



Photos (above and top): Michael Moran  
Gorlin's sixth-floor apartment (top) is at the prow of his Gorlin Tower at Aqua (above), on Allison Island in Miami Beach, Fla. On the south side looking down Indian Creek, deep balconies with aluminum brise-soleil extensions tame the sun and create layered planes of light and shadow.



Renderings: Courtesy Alexander Gorlin Architects  
The posh New York City loft Gorlin designed for architect Daniel Libeskind features florentine stone floors and views of Ground Zero (top, left and right). Colorful facades and rear driveways distinguish the latest phase of Brooklyn, N.Y.'s affordable Nehemiah row houses (above and right).





Photos (above and opposite): Michael Moran



*"the [study of the] townhouse enabled me to understand that new urbanism wasn't limited in style to traditional. it could be modern, and yet traditionally urban to the street wall."*

inspired houses he had done across the square. Planning codes dictated that the footprint maintain the street wall as one volume. Gorlin conceived his corner unit as a solid block, but one that could be carved away and animated with lively forms, light, and shadow. He anchored the outer corner with a bright red exposed-steel frame but recessed one of the glass walls beneath the roofline—a move that created a portico for the entrance stair leading to the second-floor public areas. “What was important to me about the [study of the] townhouse was that it enabled me to understand that New Urbanism wasn't limited in style to traditional,” Gorlin says. “It could be modern in style, and yet traditionally urban to the street wall.”

His whirling staircase, visible through the façade's two-story glass curtain walls, gives a hint of the drama that unfolds once inside. Creating a distinct sense of arrival is tricky on these long, narrow houses, but he managed to make his entire house—dubbed Stairway to Heaven—a promenade. Halls and stairs move up through the house, crossing from one side to another, and come up for air on the roof deck, where they corkscrew up to a nautical-inspired crow's nest. “Every step is a threshold to another condition of circulation,” creating movement through light and space, he explains.

“In each project,” he continues, “there's a theme that becomes the touchstone and animating idea that everything, in a way, has to relate back to. At Stairway to Heaven, it's all about the path to the view of the sea. It's all about the circulation and winding up to this widow's walk, where you can see the Gulf of Mexico.”

## from past to present

All this from an architect who started his career designing formal neo-

Palladian villas. After finishing graduate studies at Yale in 1980, Gorlin worked at I.M. Pei & Partners (now Pei Cobb Freed & Partners) for two years before heading to Italy on a Rome Prize Fellowship. “It was like I was reborn,” he says of the year abroad. “It was extraordinary to experience history and the landscape of the Italian villa.” Upon his return to New York City, Gorlin signed on with Kohn Pedersen Fox Architects for two years before setting up his own firm, Alexander Gorlin Architects, in 1987.

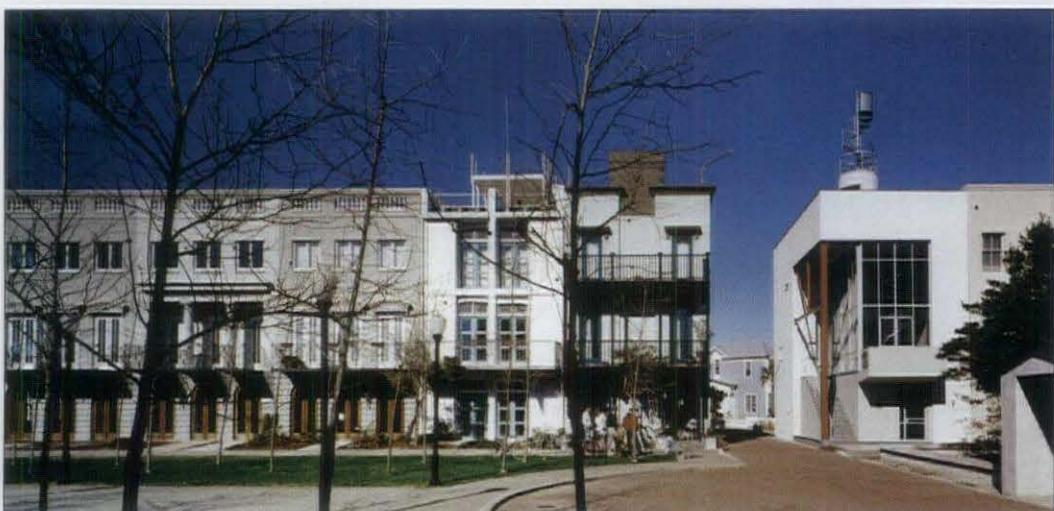
It didn't take long for Gorlin to break into a circle of power clients. Victoria Newhouse, wife of publisher S.I.

“Si” Newhouse Jr., was the first to call. She saw an article he'd written on Le Corbusier's Governor's Palace in Chandigarh, India, and asked him to design a garden gate for her Palm Beach, Fla., house. That job led to Villa Cielo, a country house in Bedford, N.Y., for Grace Mirabella, who was editing *Vogue* at the time. Other high-end commissions followed: Villa Viare in East Hampton, N.Y.; Villa Jovis in Jupiter, Fla.; Villa Marittima on Long Island, N.Y.; a classical pool pavilion for fashion designer Adrienne Vittadini in Water Mill, N.Y.; and a long list of well-received projects at Seaside and in Manhattan.

Even in his classical period, Gorlin was able to see things with a fresh eye, making exceptions to the so-called rules and visual connections between odd ideas. Vincent Scully has pointed out that some of Gorlin's early country houses broke stride with classical scale in order to incorporate a lot of glass;

*"when a house creates a very distinctive and powerful place, to me it's urban, whether it's in the country or the city."*

A departure from Gorlin's earlier classical work, his own modernist Ruskin Place townhouse respects, but reinterprets, Seaside's traditional urban code. The open entry stair (below) recalls the open loggias of Italian houses on a piazza or a brownstone stoop. A playful spiral stair (right and below, right) culminates in a rooftop crow's nest.



thus, his transition to modernist architecture at Ruskin Place was not as abrupt as it appeared. In his introduction to the 1997 monograph *Alexander Gorlin: Buildings and Projects* (Rizzoli), Paul Goldberger observed that Gorlin seems determined to trace the history of architecture in his practice, "moving through it as if through the stations of the cross. If so," he wrote, "this is a gesture motivated less by hubris than by enthusiasm, less by arrogance than by the belief that he can never truly understand architectural history until he has worked in every possible mode as a designer and not merely a scholar."

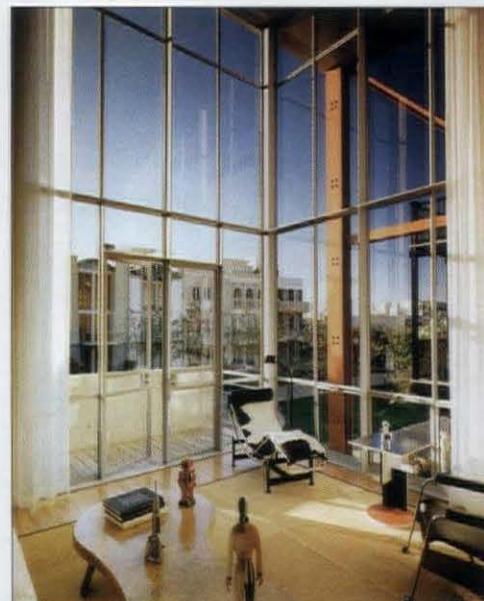
To hear Gorlin tell it, the trajectory has, in fact, involved both a search for truth and the whims of his own imagination. After Cooper Union, "to practice somewhat more traditional work was, oddly enough, the rebellious thing to do," he says. "But I've always been interested in that intersection between Modernism and classicism. History is a continuum. It's not that you simply change styles; profoundly basic principles are common to all architecture. Modern architecture can never replace these fundamental ideals. It also has a certain sense of gravity, rhythm, and order that's a reinterpretation of tradition."

If eclecticism has served Gorlin well in traditional design, it also helps to keep his modernist work upbeat and original. "Mies' work was full of light, but there was a coldness to it," he says. "I'm more interested in a sensual modernism, with coziness and livability." Although the 40 percent of his work that's nonresidential has also garnered awards—among them the North Shore Hebrew Academy in King's Point, N.Y., and a renovation of the historic Swedenborgian Church in Manhattan—he's best known for his houses.

Like all good architects, Gorlin starts with client and site but then draws from precedents that may be historical, literary, or something else entirely. "Freud talked about how dreams have a façade, like a house," he says. "You're combining fantasy and a sensual quality with architectonic sensibilities. It's about the object as a sculptural entity, and it has to do with internal consistency but being open to the site and embracing the functional and psychic needs of the client." His hard-edged, glass-and-stone Rocky Mountain House in Genesee, Colo., has a cruciform plan that grew out of the owners' request for separate wings for them and for the children, but it also references the ancient Egyptian hieroglyph of a cross—a powerful symbol for marking a place on earth. That's why, although it sits on a small mountain, Gorlin thinks of it as an urban house. "When a house creates a very distinctive and powerful place, to me it's urban, whether it's in the country or the city," he says.

Behind that street presence, however, Gorlin delights in creating a sanctuary that's special to his clients. "A house has to have an interior ambience that makes you feel at home," he says. "It has to be filled with light and have spaces that are private and secluded. And, maybe because I grew up in a small apartment in Queens, I've found that the view out is essential to having a home that is a sanctuary."

In *Alexander Gorlin: Buildings and Projects*, Scully wrote that "if his work teaches us anything, it is not to be dour about things in the high modern manner." It will be interesting to see where Gorlin's prolific ideas take him next. But whatever his future houses look like, no doubt the work will be optimistic, in tune with his own intuition. **ra**



Photos: Steven Brooke Studios  
The double-height living room cube in Gorlin's Seaside, Fla., townhouse (top) glows at dusk; inside, it frames views of the square.



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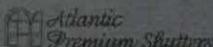
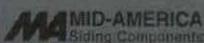
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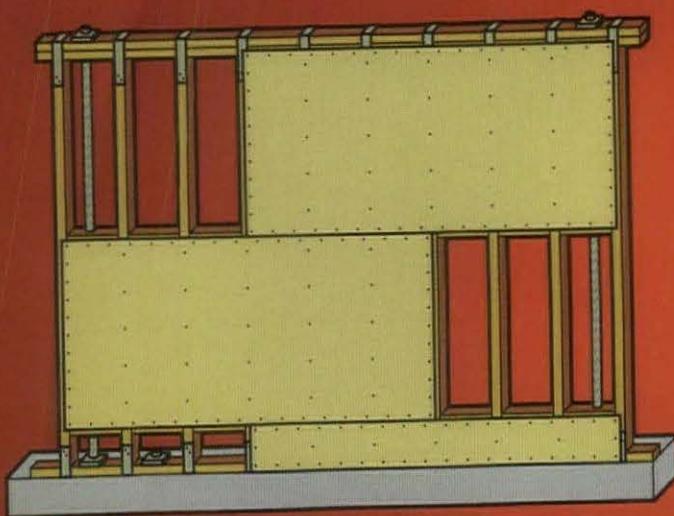
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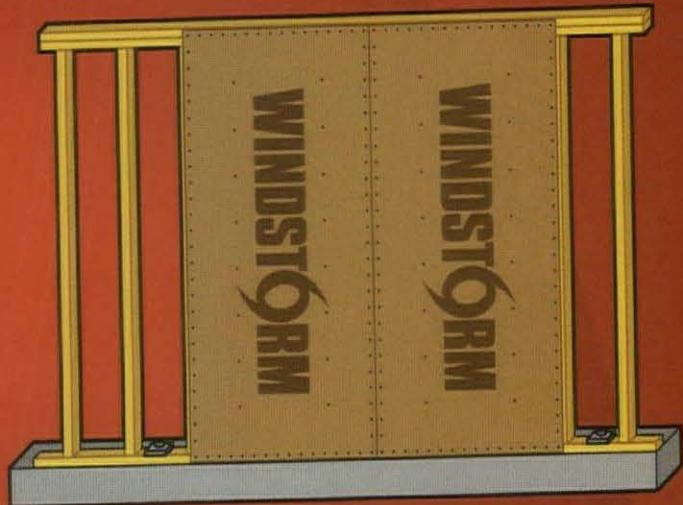
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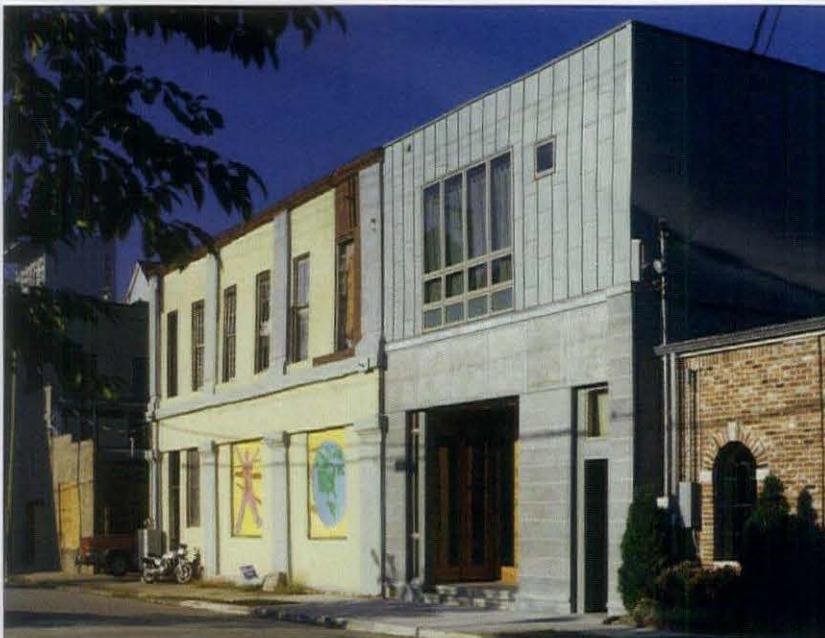
# close calls

by meghan drueding, nigel f. maynard, and shelley d. hutchins

## southside story

**C**hattanooga, Tenn., has attracted global attention for its ongoing downtown revitalization. Support from the local political, business, and nonprofit communities has helped fuel the city's turnaround. But small infill buildings like this artists' studio, gallery, and residence in the once-industrial Southside neighborhood are another essential step. "There was nothing there 10 years ago," says the project's architect, Craig Kronenberg, AIA. Artists lured by cheap real estate and lofty spaces gradually began to move into the area—including Kronenberg's sister-in-law, Melissa Hefferlin, and her husband, Daud Akhriev. The couple, both painters, purchased a one-story warehouse and asked Kronenberg to transform it into a space where they could live and work.

He started by designing a new painting studio for both artists at the rear of the 26-foot-wide-by-130-foot-deep lot. The building's pitched roof and high ceilings allowed for a long, north-facing skylight and accommodated Akhriev's preference for painting on large canvases. A courtyard separates the studio from the rebuilt, now two-story, front structure, which holds a gallery space on the ground floor and a one-bedroom apartment for



The street side of the property holds the first-floor gallery and upstairs apartment (above and left); the painting studio (opposite) occupies the rear of the site.

"they were such enlightened clients.

they treated us as artists."—craig kronenberg, aia



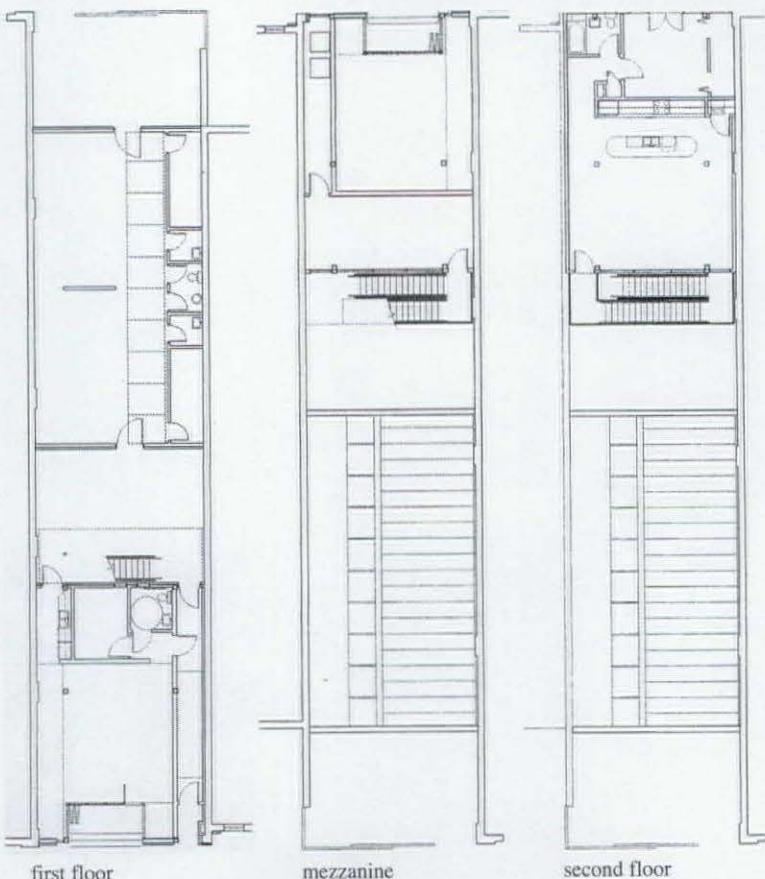
# close calls

Hefferlin and Akhriev on the second level.

Though Kronenberg had initially envisioned zinc cladding for the studio, Akhriev wanted stone, as a reference to the buildings he remembered from his Ingush upbringing in the former Soviet Union. Akhriev applied it himself; he also personally pickled the wood for the apartment and studio ceilings and hand-salvaged heart pine for the gallery's front doors and the studio's floors. Such hands-on involvement pleased Kronenberg, who viewed the project as a complete collaboration. "They were such enlightened clients," he says. "They treated us as artists, as we would them."

Other material choices related to the local context. For instance, zinc covers the apartment's exterior, in a nod to the Southside neighborhood's history as a metalworking center. A rare, fossil-embedded Tennessee limestone sheaths the lower, gallery half of the building. The complex's diminutive scale falls in line with the rest of the streetscape, which now boasts adaptive-reuse condominiums, galleries, art supply stores, and restaurants. Kronenberg wasn't sure what would happen to the buildings on either side of the property, so he designed the project to be structurally independent from its neighbors. "It just lightly touches the buildings next to it, like inserting a table between two walls," he says.

He and Heidi Hefferlin, AIA, his wife and business partner (and Melissa Hefferlin's sister), live in a new townhome on the next block—one of seven attached units they've designed and developed themselves. They're working on three more such projects in the immediate area. In Chattanooga, it seems, the classic tradition of artists and designers reviving downtrodden urban areas is alive and well.—*m.d.*



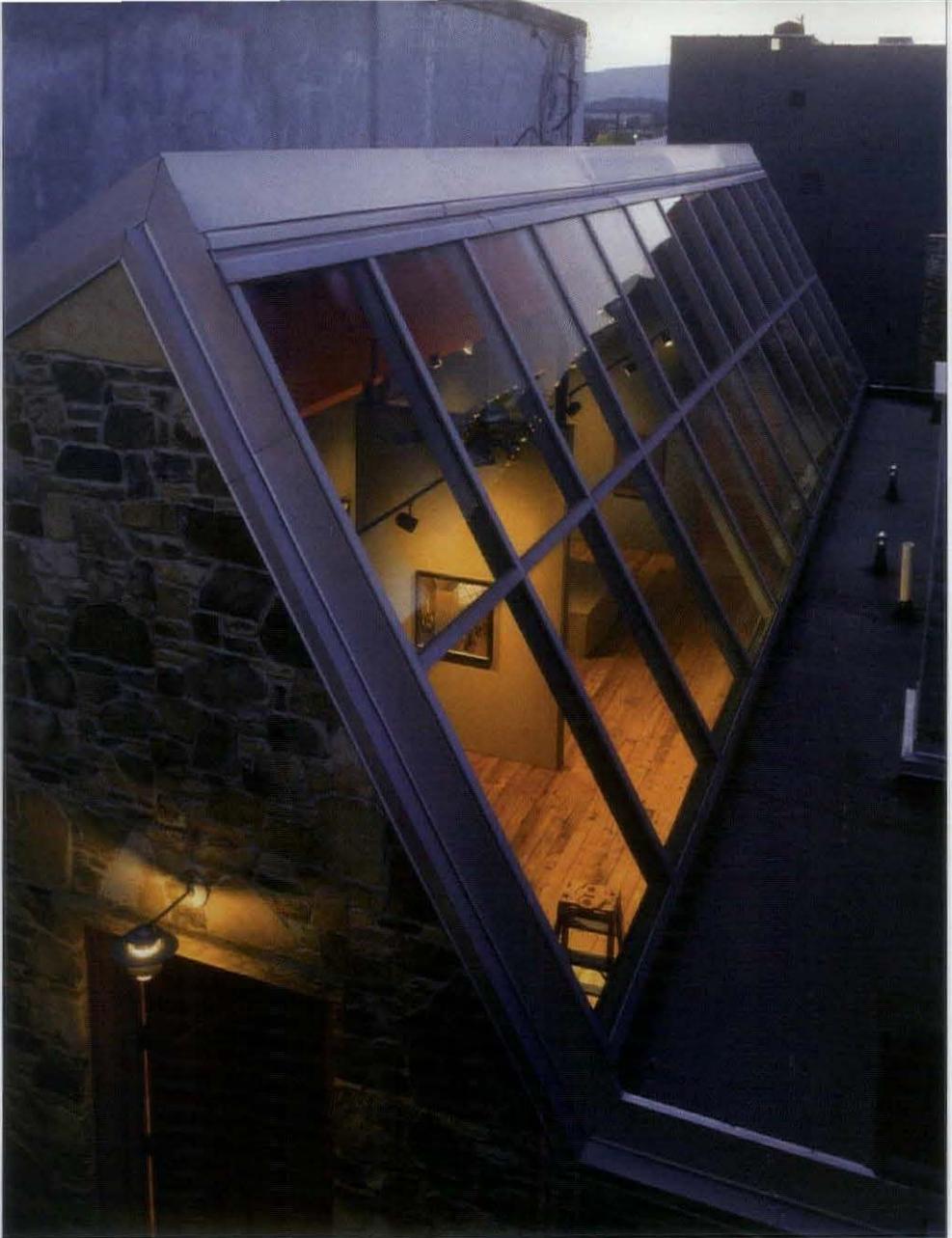
first floor

mezzanine

second floor



The clients chose a rich color palette for the interiors of the apartment (above) and studio (below). Soft northern sunlight washes the studio's walls.



Stone walls enclose the courtyard between the gallery and studio. The space becomes an outdoor dining room in mild weather (below, right).



**project:**

Akhriev-Hefferlin Williams Street Studio, Chattanooga, Tenn.

**architect:**

Hefferlin+Kronenberg Architects, Chattanooga

**general contractor:**

Jim Morrow, Jim Morrow Construction, Chattanooga

**project size:**

3,595 square feet (includes residence, studio, and gallery)

**site size:**

0.08 acre

**construction cost:**

Approximately \$180 per square foot

**photography:**

Tim Street-Porter, except where noted

Daud Akhriev

# close calls

## side by side

Developers are often accused of myopia—of ignoring how their projects relate to the community at large. Geoffrey T. Prentiss, AIA, was not about to make that mistake for this small residential/commercial project near downtown Seattle, in the largely residential neighborhood of Queen Anne Hill.

"It all started with an existing 1910 building that had gone through many iterations," Prentiss says of the structure, whose ground floor he rented for his practice. "It was a grocery store with an apartment above, an animal clinic, a clothing store, and a travel agency." But when a developer, citing cost concerns, abandoned his plan to raze the building and put up a new one with four residential units atop one commercial space, Prentiss bought the property.

"The anticipated expense at that time exceeded \$1.6 million, which was significantly more than [the developer] had planned to invest in the property," Prentiss explains. So, figuring that the developer's biggest cost was in demolishing the structure as well as providing nine parking spaces, Prentiss pursued a different approach.

"Instead of looking at the maximum allowable development, I wanted to work with the existing framework to maintain the sense of history," he says. He renovated the building and attached a



"instead of looking at the maximum allowable development, i wanted to work with the existing framework to maintain the sense of history."

—geoffrey t. prentiss, aia

The architect preserved and renovated an existing commercial building (top), but attached a new structure that contains his architectural practice on the ground floor and an apartment above. Materials in the light-filled office (above and opposite) include straightforward concrete, plywood, and cinder block.



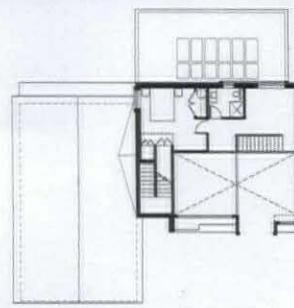
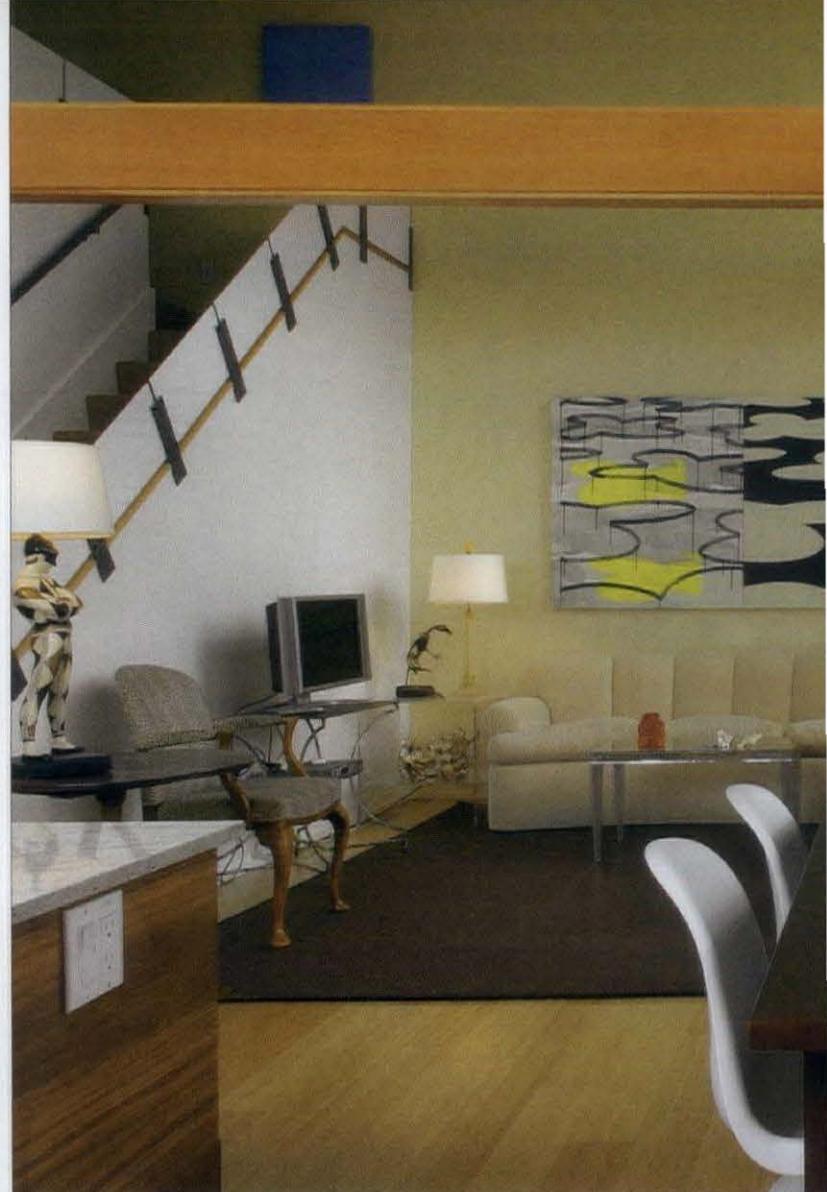
# close calls

simple concrete block volume, locating his firm on the first level and an apartment above. "Instead of building up to the street, we pushed [the building] back 20 feet to create a small courtyard," he says. "There is a gain of aesthetic instead of a financial gain."

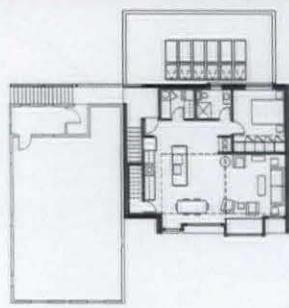
The new building has a window grouping similar to that of the old structure, but it's decidedly modern. A wood-framed, copper-clad bay volume creates shadows and texture on the upper portion, and its windows flood the two-level apartment with southern light. A blend of the modest and the moderately expensive, the unit is outfitted with blue laminate kitchen cabinets and countertops and a granite-topped island made of walnut. Bamboo covers the floors in the main living areas; the laundry room has linoleum. Prentiss' office downstairs is a large open space with plywood floors and a half dozen French doors. "We don't have to use any artificial light, because daylight is so plentiful," the architect says.

Queen Anne Hill is desirable for its proximity to the city center and its remove from other commercial establishments, Prentiss explains. Preserving its genteel appeal, therefore, was important. The first floor of the existing building is now an organic coffeehouse, a new gathering spot for locals. (The new structure also has a rooftop terrace available to all tenants.)

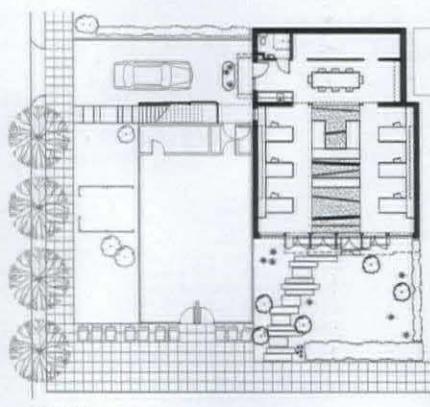
"Working with what was there made the project less expensive, but it also made it easy to get the project approved," Prentiss says. "Now you have the old with the new, and it adds character to the neighborhood." —n.f.m.



second floor

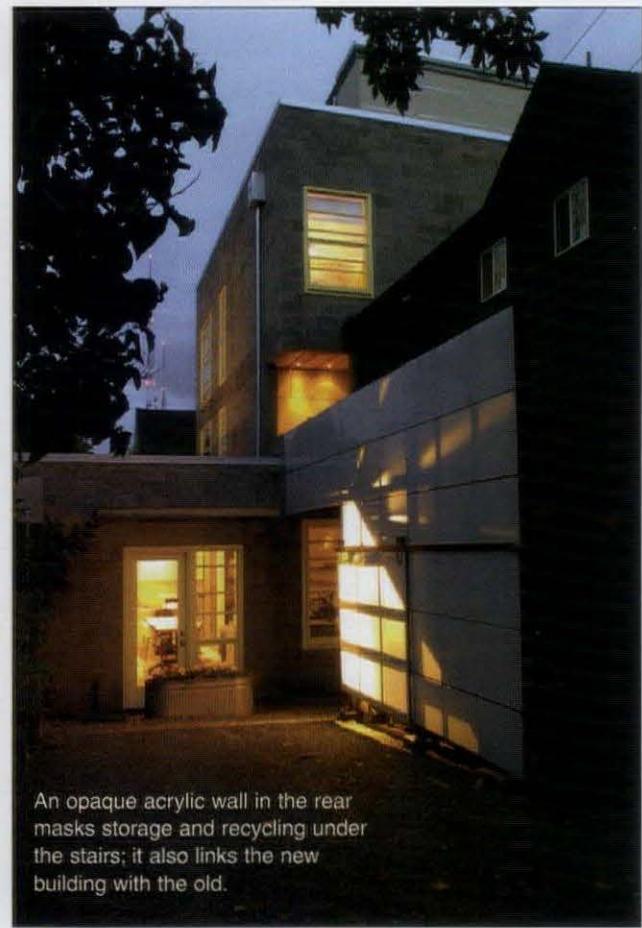


mezzanine



first floor

Large floor-to-ceiling Douglas fir windows bring large amounts of light into the apartment's double-height living area (top and opposite). A diverse mix of materials—laminate, granite, bamboo, and walnut among them—bring elegance to the space.



An opaque acrylic wall in the rear masks storage and recycling under the stairs; it also links the new building with the old.



**project:**

Mambo Palazzo, Seattle

**architect/general contractor:**

Prentiss Architects, Seattle

**project size:**

6,158 square feet (includes interior and exterior)

**site size:**

0.08 acre

**construction cost:**

\$161 per square foot

**photography:**

Michael Cole

# close calls

## true grit

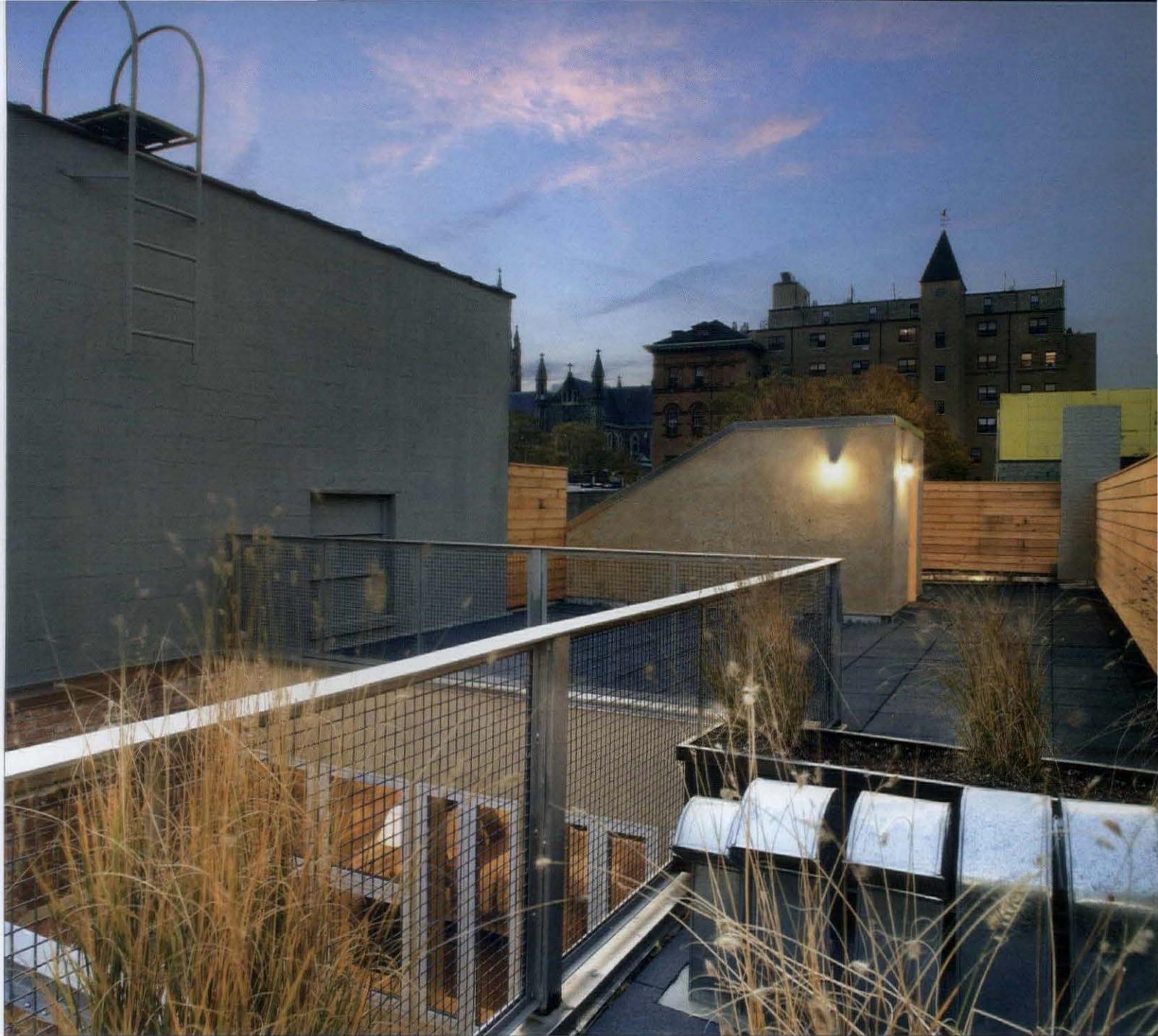
**n**“New York is just one big case of mixed-use integration,” says Caleb Crawford, LEED AP. And thus, this conversion of a former manufacturing warehouse into a duplex simply followed a natural progression.

The existing two-story structure was built to the limit of its 25-foot-wide-by-100-foot-deep lot, so the big question was how to bring in light and air. But Crawford had an answer: “Instead of chopping off the back for a traditional rear yard, we cut out the middle and made a courtyard,” he explains. The move also solved the problem of a busy street in front and an unappealing alley in back. Views and light were definitely best served by an open center section.

To guard the budget, preserve materials, and honor the neighborhood’s “feeling of toughness,” Crawford and his partners retained as much of the building’s “site, structure, and skin” as possible. Wood joist construction supported by brick-bearing walls made it easy to remove the center section. Those old bricks remain exposed throughout much of the interior space, with concrete-filled former windows and doors also expressed as part of the industrial collage. Street-level floors were taken down to the concrete slab and freshened with an epoxy coating. Upstairs, wood subfloors were patched (with materials from the cutout section) and refinished as a final surface. Even the original stair, railings intact, still services the rear unit.

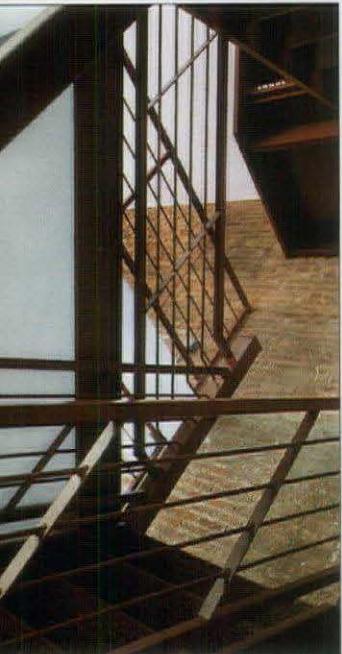
One important piece was beyond salvaging, however: The façade was literally falling off. But Crawford saw the bright side. “It gave us the great opportunity to redo the front of the building,” he says. Thanks to an investor who also owns a steel-fabrication company, the new elevation is built to last with off-the-shelf, 3-foot-by-8-foot steel sheets. “We tried to reduce waste, and this





Diverse materials underscore the building's mixed-use neighborhood. Coarse and reminiscent of bygone days, exposed bricks serve as a counterpoint to slicker media, such as steel, glass, aluminum, and drywall.

# close calls



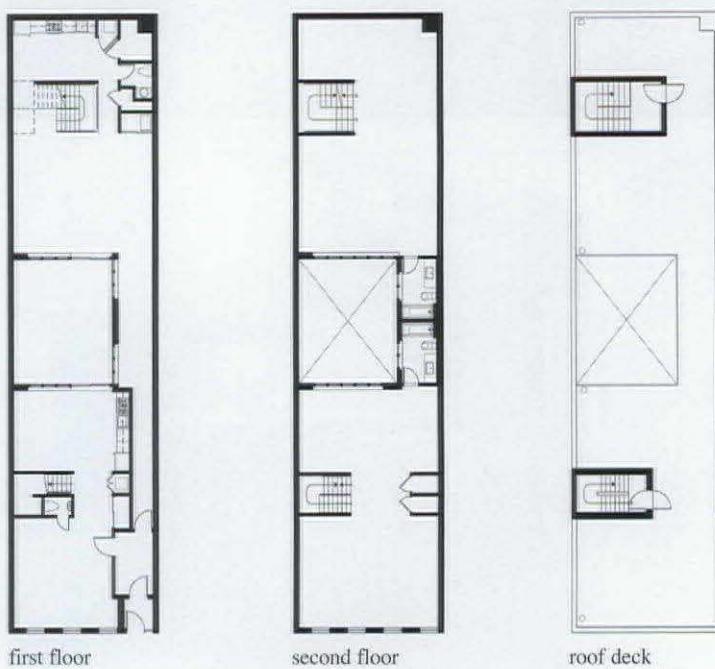
Straightforward industrial detailing on this existing stair (above and opposite) suggests the building's commercial origin.

inches of space to pack in the insulation for ratings as high as R50 on the roof. The roof was also reinforced and outfitted for outdoor living, complete with recycled tires as decking material. In fact, the firm's design was so conscientious, it earned the building an Energy Star label.—*s.d.h.*

was an efficient use of the material," he explains. Using the panels in a typical rainscreen construction resulted in a clean look without visible joinery. It also gave some dimensional flexibility. "There are only two inches of back-and-forth movement in the steel panels," he says, "but it yields a huge effect." The self-confessed "old New Yorker who prefers bars on windows to alarm systems" further enlivened the sleek elevation by designing those bars in a Mondrian-like pattern.

In contrast to the shadowy façade, courtyard walls feature shiny aluminum panels and bright white finishes. Glossy surfaces reflect additional light into the open units and lend a constantly sunny disposition to the compact outdoor spaces. Vertical steel cables extend two stories up to a steel bar spanning the width of the courtyard. Evergreen vines climb those cables. The organic divider affords privacy while bringing a touch of nature to the hardscaped yard.

Along with recycling and reusing building parts, the firm specified high-efficiency air and heating systems, appliances, and light fixtures. Old floor and ceiling joists offered 10-plus



"there are only two inches of back-and-forth movement in the steel panels, but it yields a huge effect." —caleb crawford, leed ap



The architects omitted interior walls in the two-story units. However, ducts are spaced so that owners may add partitions, as desired.



**project:**

262 Bond Street, Brooklyn, N.Y.

**architect:**

Coggan Crawford Schaut, Brooklyn

**general contractor/developer:**

Giancola Contracting, Brooklyn

**project size:**

2,008 square feet per unit (plus 990 square feet of private outdoor space)

**site size:**

0.06 acre

**construction cost:**

\$175 per square foot

**sales price:**

\$1.4 million per unit

**number of units:**

2

**photography:**

Paul Finkel

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# master glass

modern glazing is selective in what it reveals and what it conceals.

by nigel f. maynard

**W**hitney Sander's house is located on a 28-foot-by-90-foot lot in a dense Venice, Calif., neighborhood. Its three-foot setback means the architect can stand in his house and seemingly shake his neighbor's hand, and yet, he somehow managed to design light-filled spaces that are visually off limits to outsiders.

Designing and building homes in urban environments can be an exciting professional challenge that centers on this common conundrum: How do you reconcile your clients' desire for light with their need for privacy? "The tricky thing," says Michael Taylor, a founding partner of Toronto-based Taylor Smyth Architects, "is that people want their spaces to address the outdoors, but they may be self-conscious" living on display. Conventional windows, curtains, and artificial lighting are typical mediators, but their limitations are prompting some architects and designers to explore more sophisticated options. Specialized glazing, light-diffused wall systems, and plastic and acrylic exterior wall panels are a few of the contemporary solutions they're using.



Day or night, the extruded acrylic walls of Whitney Sander's Venice, Calif., house glow like a Japanese lantern. Opaque and screened with metal fins, they also neutralize would-be gawkers and the strongest of the sun's rays.

Sharon Risedorph

## no shows

Architectural glass is the new favorite among architects working in urban environments. "We try to use glass as much as we can," says Janet Bloomberg, AIA, principal of Washington, D.C.-based KUBE Architecture. She says she prefers frosted glass because it allows light to penetrate the interior during the day but preserves homeowners' privacy when the house is lit from within at night. In some cases, she'll design walls in which the lower 7 feet is frosted glass and the upper 18 inches is clear glass.

Because frosted glass is usually pricey, Bloomberg admits to improvising when

budgets are tight. One trick she's used is to "have the glass company come in and put a frosted film over the window," she says. "It's about \$5 to \$10 per square foot cheaper to do than acid-etched glass."

Other firms strategically arrange back-painted and clear glass to limit what the outside world sees. "We don't feel you have to close yourself off from the city," Taylor says, "so we might use regular glass with a wood screen" on the exterior. The work-around "allows people to look out and still get light," he explains. For his own house, Taylor used film to counter the transparency of clear glass, admitting that it's

"cheaper and easier to manipulate than frosted glass."

Rebecca B. Swanston, AIA, principal of Baltimore-based Swanston & Associates, makes a point of giving her clients plenty of open, yet controlled, views. "The urban landscape is magical, and the night sky is quite wonderful," she says. Swanston is especially fond of obscured glass, which allows homeowners to see out but prevents passersby from seeing in. "We prefer etched glass, because sandblasted glass shows fingerprints and is hard to clean," she explains. As a compromise, she sometimes uses architectural plantation blinds or electronic shades

*continued on page 82*

from Lutron Electronics Co. in Coopersburg, Pa.

Lutron's Sivoia QED shading products operate with low-voltage drives. Each can be powered by remote control or electronic keypad and integrates with Lutron's lighting-control systems. Swanston, who usually specifies a system that will disappear into the ceiling, says she appreciates the privacy and control over light transmission the products provide and their stealth when not in use. MechoShade Systems of Long Island City, N.Y., offers similar systems featuring a variety of shade and installation options.

### all systems go

Glass and shading solutions might be a tad too conservative for some architects, especially those who enjoy combing the commercial world for alternatives. Sander did just that when designing the street-facing volume on his own house.

"The large wall of [that volume] faces east, so I wanted light but not direct light," he explains. Clear glass was too expensive, and other options didn't suit the application, so the principal of Sander Architects chose 4-foot-by-24-foot opaque Deglas Heatstop panels from Degussa Röhm CYRO instead. According to the manufacturer, the  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-thick extruded acrylic sheets are impact- and shatter-resistant and have a rigid design that can withstand live loads. They're also said to be energy-efficient, light-

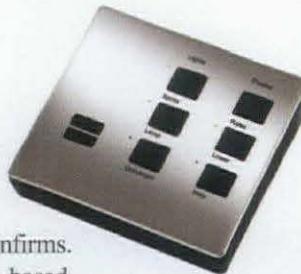
weight, and inexpensive.

"They were half the cost of glass," Sander confirms.

Canton, Mich.-based Duo-Gard Industries makes comparable vertical glazing systems that can be used in exterior walls. One such product is PCSS, a new generation of polycarbonate structured sheets that balance light transmission and energy efficiency. Suitable for windows, skylights, walls, and clerestories, the multiwall glazing system reportedly weighs one-sixth as much as traditional glass and has 200 times the impact strength, enabling architects to work with wider spans and lighter supports. It's also about one-third to half as pricey as glass or fiberglass.

Because he works in and around the nation's capital, Alexandria, Va.-based Robert M. Gurney, FAIA, often encounters historic row houses and long, narrow spaces. To bring natural light into the homes he designs, he relies on structural composite sandwich panels from Kalwall Corp. in Manchester, N.H. The architect calls Kalwall "a great material," noting that it's "particularly useful in townhouses."

Its manufacturer describes Kalwall as a translucent wall system formed by permanently bonding fiberglass-reinforced faces to a grid constructed of interlocked, structural aluminum, thermally broken I-beams. Said to be both lightweight and strong, Kalwall features fiberglass insulation between



Design pros who prefer clear glass for their urban projects can use motorized architectural shades similar to this system from Lutron (right), which can be outfitted with a remote control or an electronic keypad (above).



Photos: Courtesy Lutron Electronics Co.

its sheets, making it a potentially effective controller of solar heat gain. Each  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-thick panel measures up to 5 feet by 20 feet and is available in a variety of finishes. (Other makers of lightweight, translucent walls include Advanced Glazing Systems in Burnaby, British Columbia; CPI International of Lake Forest, Ill.; Janesville, Wis.-based Gallina; and Polygal in Charlotte, N.C.)

Architects unconstrained by budget limitations often turn to European structural glazing systems, such as LINIT channel glass by Lamberts. Distributed by Bendheim Wall Systems of Passaic, N.J., LINIT can be spiced to heights of up to 23 feet—without structural framing members. Profilit, a self-supporting glazing system from Pilkington Building Products in Toledo, Ohio, is yet another option.

Given the range of choices, it's especially important to

weigh the pros and cons of each solution carefully. Energy efficiency considerations will vary depending on the project's geographic location, for example, and widely ranging structural capacities will make some products more suitable than others in certain situations. It's also a good idea to investigate the client's security needs, since impact strength varies by system.

Once you've done your homework, your only limitation might be your imagination. If speced well, alternative glazing solutions can deliver spaces that are light years ahead of more conventional options—and a great frustration to nosy neighbors everywhere. *ra*

*For the contact information of companies mentioned in this article, please visit [www.residentialarchitect.com](http://www.residentialarchitect.com).*

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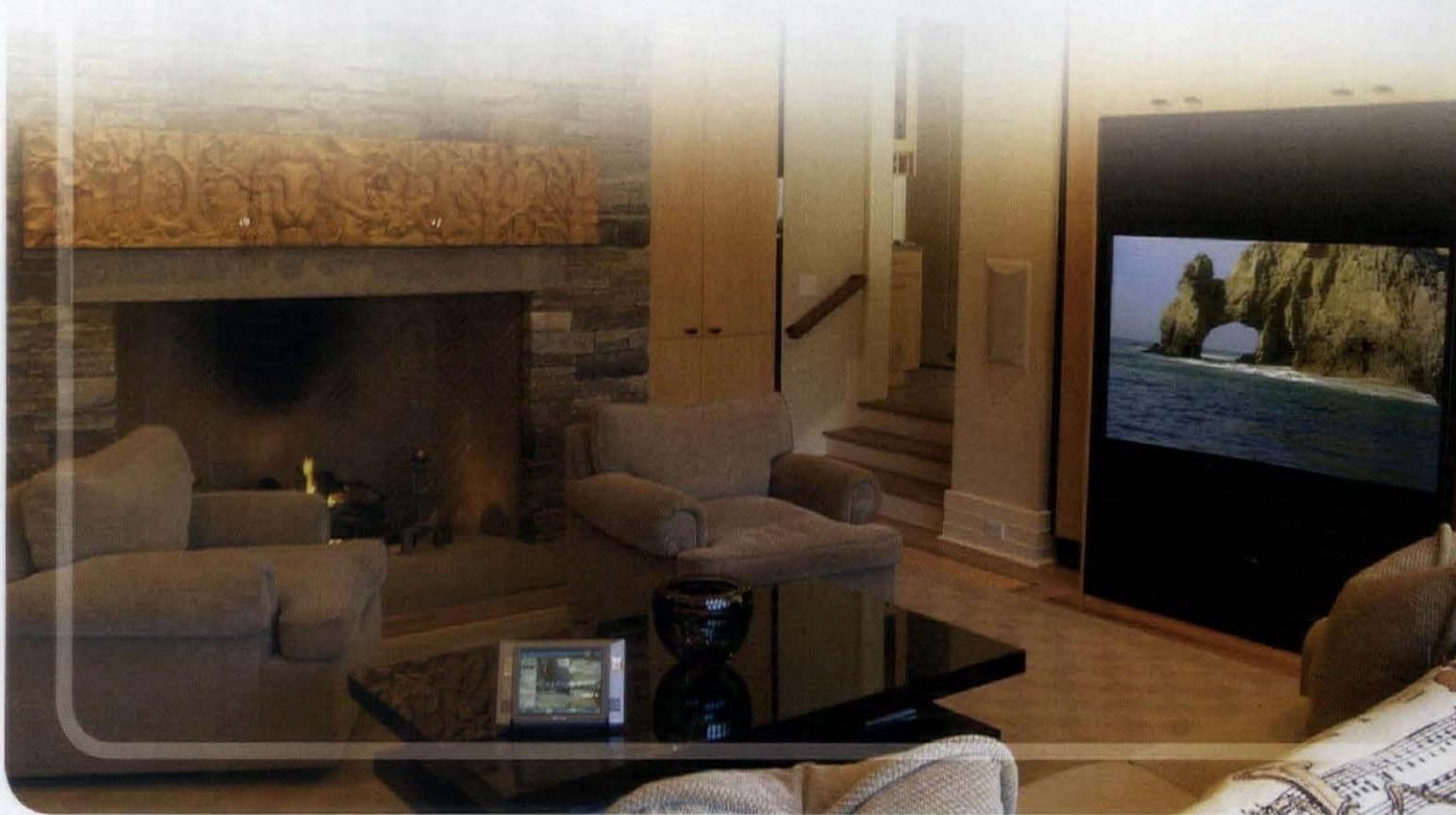
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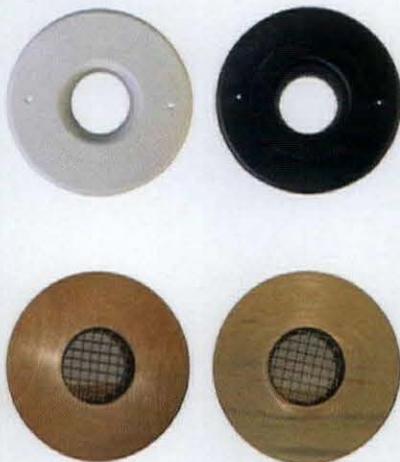
When a project calls for exterior paint, Anderson turns to Duron. "It's easy to get in the city," she says

of the Beltsville, Md.-based company's products, but she also appreciates its "nice color charts." Duron's line of 100 percent acrylic exterior paints includes Weathershield and Signature Lifetime, an ultra-premium coating with self-priming capabilities. All varieties reportedly hide surface imperfections and resist fading, mildew, and chalking. Duron Paints

& Wallcoverings, 800.723.8766; [www.duron.com](http://www.duron.com).

#### pièce de résistance

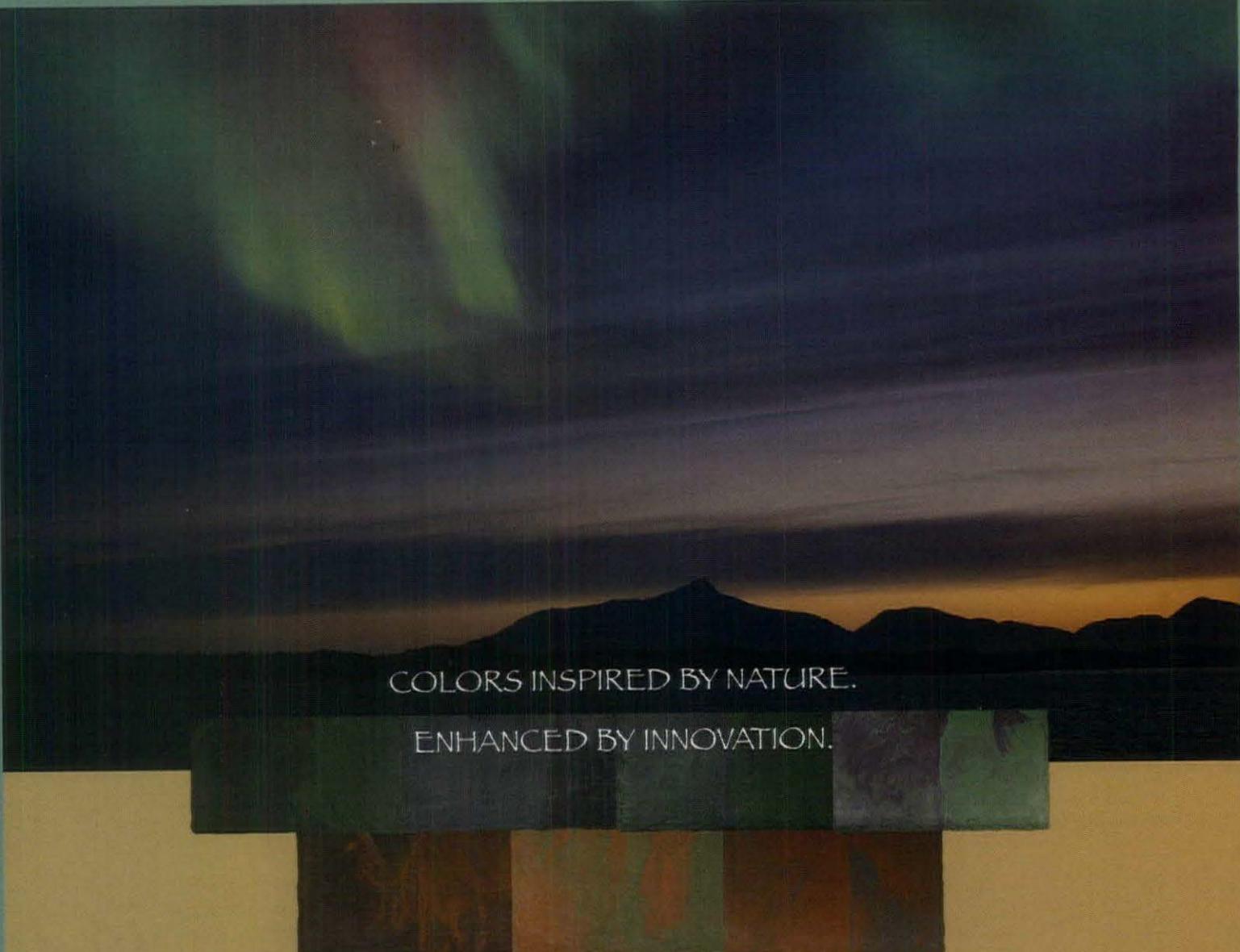
Wood is great for exterior trim, but Mother Nature can wreak havoc on its structural integrity. So Anderson opts for Fypon polyurethane molding instead, calling it "an economical solution for trim work," particularly in historic districts. Available in more than 6,000 interior and exterior varieties, Fypon trim pieces are lightweight and virtually maintenance-free. They come double-primed and, like wood, can be sawed, nailed, or glued. Fypon, 800.446.3040; [www.fypon.com](http://www.fypon.com).



#### inside moves

With Unico's miniduct system, Anderson can retrofit old houses with contemporary heating and cooling systems without destroying their original craftsmanship. "The aesthetics of the interior are not compromised for modern comfort, so the owner can have it both ways," she enthuses. The St. Louis company's high-velocity system accommodates all types of spaces with little to no remodeling required: modular air handlers can be installed in ceilings and crawl spaces, and flexible sound-attenuated ducts can be routed through existing cavities. Unico, 800.527.0896; [www.unicosystem.com](http://www.unicosystem.com).

—nigel f. maynard



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## portion control

Miele's KM400 Series Combi sets merge gas and electric cooking options for versatility. The identical width and depth of each modular unit (11½ inches by 20½ inches) enables a symmetrical assembly of mix-and-match parts. Choose from four electrical options—double-burner, electric boiler and fryer, contact griddle, or barbecue—and two gas selections: double-burner or wok burner. The units can also be installed individually for home chefs who want to set up separate cooking stations. Miele, 800.843.7231; [www.miele.com](http://www.miele.com).



## high five

Gastronomes can conquer their small kitchens with FiveStar's commercial-strength 24-inch range, which fits flush with standard countertops and cabinetry for sleek lines. Vari-Flame burners permit a constant simmer as low as 400 BTUs. A Turbo Airflow convection oven circulates heated air for fast and even cooking. Other standard features include removable drip pans and a wok ring; continuous grates and sealed burners are optional. FiveStar, 800.553.7704; [www.fivestarrange.com](http://www.fivestarrange.com).

*continued on page 90*



## surface charm

For those who like it hot, the Viking professional series of gas companion ranges can be outfitted with a single wok top featuring a 27,500 BTU burner. If grilling's the thing, go for the all-char-grill surface. Pancake fanatic? Then get the all-griddle surface with a machined-steel blanchard finish for stick-resistant cooking. Each unit's 3.1-cubic-foot oven features a 1,500-degree infrared broiler for restaurant-quality searing and browning. Viking Range Corp., 888.845.4641; [www.vikingrange.com](http://www.vikingrange.com).



## free range

Aga's Companion freestanding range brings classic style and ferrous strength to the table. At just 24 inches wide, the dual-fuel range offers the speed of convection, plus a conventional compartment with an integral broiler. Its cast iron construction is coated with three layers of tough vitreous enamel in your choice of 15 delectable colors, including chocolate, claret, and pistachio. Aga Ranges, 866.424.

2487; [www.agaranges.com](http://www.agaranges.com).

## chef's choice

The Vario 200 Series of modular appliances from Gaggenau allows adventurous chefs with limited workspaces to mix it up at will. The line of 12-inch cooktops includes a deep fryer, an in-counter steamer, an electric grill, and a gas wok, as well as more traditional pieces, among them a two-burner gas cooktop and a two-zone glass-ceramic cooktop. Each unit is crafted of stain-resistant, glass-shot-blasted aluminum panels for hardiness and enduring good looks. Gaggenau USA/Canada, 800.828.9165; [www.gaggenau-usa.com](http://www.gaggenau-usa.com).

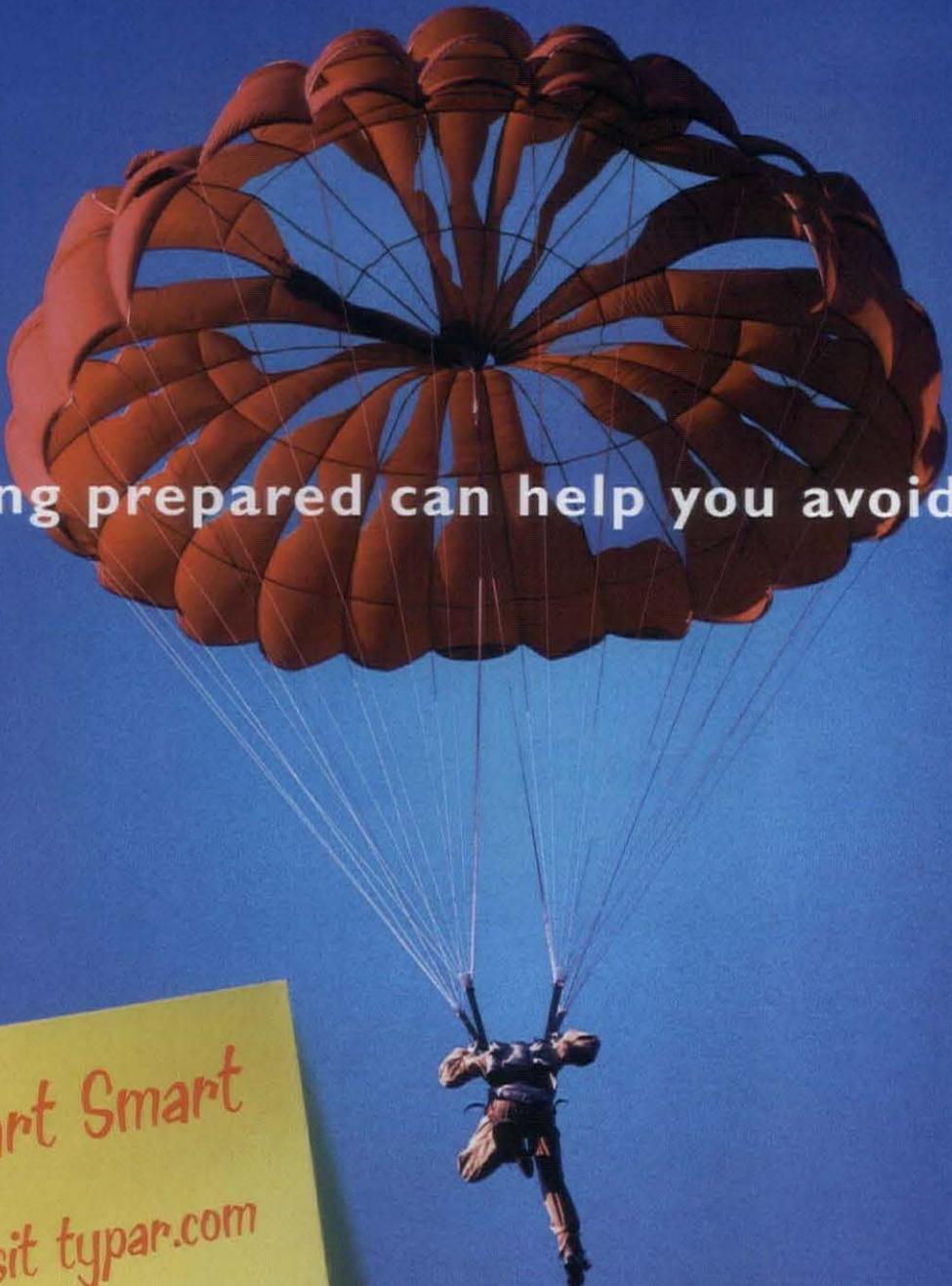


## serenity now

Top off that compact high-end range with a similarly small, albeit chic, ventilation hood from Zephyr's Elica Collection. The Om mini employs carbon filters to purify the air and a silencer kit to squelch noise. Its simple 21-inch circle-in-a-square design can be spec'd in black, white, red, or orange and customized with a silk screen. Hidden halogens are dimmable using controls concealed on the side panel. Ductless venting makes for easy installation, and an eye-catching cone-shaped remote doubles as a conversation piece. Zephyr Ventilation, 877.937.4975; [www.zephyronline.com](http://www.zephyronline.com).



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sponsor/simonton](http://www.aecdaily.com/sponsor/simonton)**Title of Coursework:***The Benefits Of Building With Impact  
Resistant Windows And Doors In  
Coastal Regions***Number of AIA Credits Earned:**

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This online course developed by Simonton Windows® in accordance with AIA certification requirements provides an overview of the features of impact resistant windows and doors, and includes discussions on tropical cyclones, building code requirements, wind load testing, and comparisons of various windborne debris protection systems.

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Upon completing this course, you will have a better understanding of:

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- The evolution of building codes, terminology and the calculation of design pressure.
- Structural testing, cyclic testing, small and large missile impact testing.
- The characteristics, advantages and disadvantages of protective shutter systems and impact glazing systems.
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#### I. The Fundamentals Of Tropical Cyclones

The three classifications of tropical cyclones are: tropical depression, tropical storm, and hurricane. A tropical cyclone requires the following conditions to strengthen into a hurricane:

- Pre-existing disturbance with thunderstorms
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The Saffir-Simpson Scale is used to rate a hurricane's intensity, from Category 1 to Category 5, based on its current wind speed. Research has shown that the most destructive damage occurs when the building envelope is compromised. What typically leads to building failure is the increased wind pressure on the anchoring of the walls to the floor, and the roof to the walls.

#### II. Design Pressure And Building Codes

Most building codes used in the U.S. today are based on the International Building Code (IBC), which references the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) standard ASCE 7-02 "Minimum Design Loads for Buildings and Other Structures" for wind load design. Section 6 of ASCE 7-02 pertains to wind load calculations for "Main Wind-Force Resisting Systems" and "Components and Cladding." It provides basic wind load provisions and procedures to convert basic wind speed into design pressure based on several factors. Design pressure for windows can be calculated using the following equation:  $p = (0.00256)(Kz)(Kzt)(Kd)(V2)(I)(GCp)$ .

#### III. Wind Load Testing Methods

Small and large missile impact testing is covered by ASTM E1996-04. The comparable testing standards for Miami-Dade and Broward include: TAS 201-94, TAS 202-94, and TAS 203-94. All windows and doors are rated for air, water, and wind load (structural) performance using the AAMA 101 standard. In addition, products are subjected to cyclic testing designed to simulate the positive and negative pressures of hurricane-force winds. The standard test method for cyclic testing, referenced by the IBC and the AAMA, is ASTM E1886-05.

Products are also tested for air leakage on a pass/fail basis in accordance with ASTM E21. To pass, the air leakage must be less than 0. cfm/ft<sup>2</sup>. Residential products are tested for water penetration resistance in accordance with ASTM E547. To pass the test, the product must not leak.

#### IV. Windborne Debris Protection Options

The main purpose of all opening protection systems (plywood, protective shutters, or impact-resistant window systems) is to keep air pressure from increasing inside the structure. Plywood and protective shutters only provide protection when installed, bar any outside view, and proffer an invitation for burglary when left installed too long. Impact-resistant glazing systems are specifically designed and tested to withstand hurricane-force winds and offer the following advantages over other opening protection systems: more aesthetically pleasing than shutters, impact glazing blocks 99% of UV rays, cuts perceived exterior noise by 35%, does not break into dangerous shards, provides passive protection against storms and forced entry, and requires no storage. The disadvantages of impact-resistant glazing systems include: high cost, greater weight and more difficult installation than standard windows, and size limitations.

#### V. Impact Glazing Systems

Impact-resistant windows are constructed with a plastic interlayer that is laminated between two panes of glass. They are generally available in a variety of sizes and configurations such as fixed, sliding, casement, double and single hung windows. Also, to provide energy efficiency, impact windows are available with insulating glass units that can incorporate Low-E coatings and tinted glass. The key consideration when specifying impact-resistant windows is to use a product that meets the DP requirement for the specific application in which it will be used. AAMA Certification (American Architectural Manufacturers Association) provides the standards and validation of product performance and quality for aluminum, vinyl, and wood-framed windows and glass doors for residential, commercial, and architectural applications.

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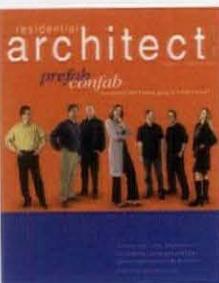
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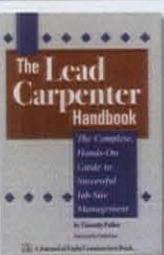
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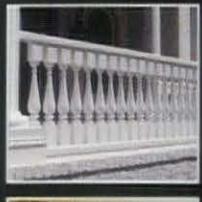


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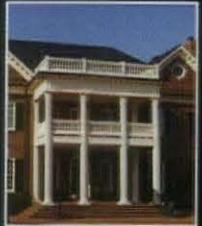
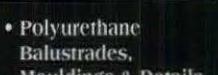
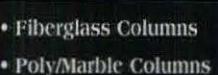
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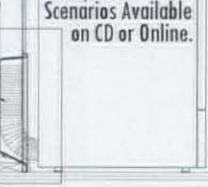
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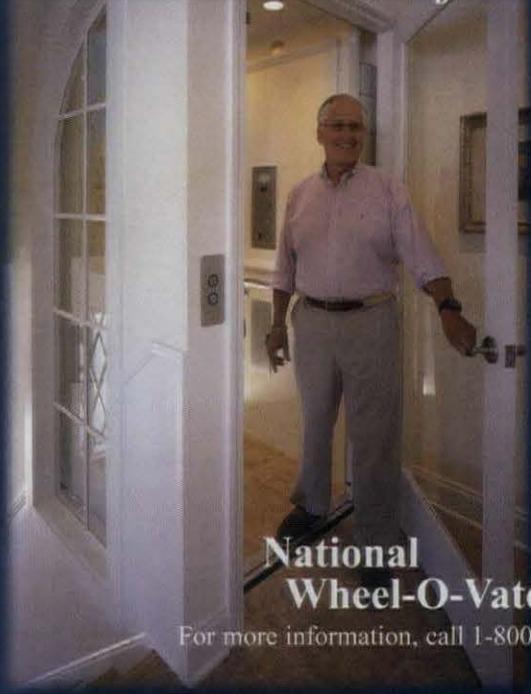
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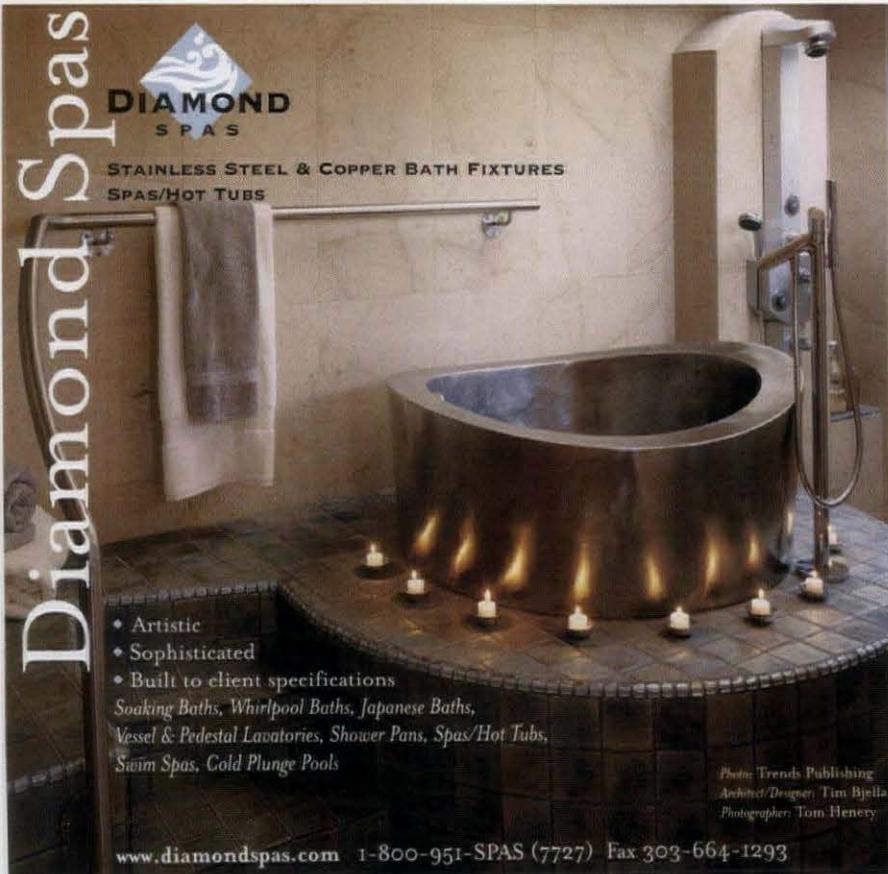
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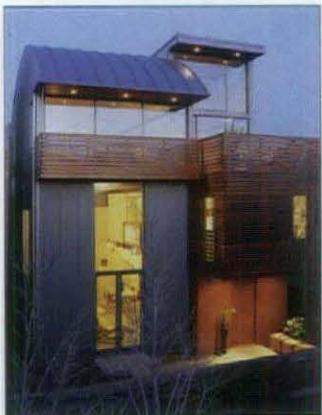
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**P**atrick Sheahan and Cathleen Quandt love their commute. A light-infused stairway leads the architect couple from their mezzanine master suite to their street-level studio. Sometimes they take the long way, though, climbing to the kitchen and other living spaces on the third floor, where



views of the Golden Gate Bridge are an inviting distraction.

The live/work proximity fits

nicely with the pair's sustainable practice, as do the building's radiant heat, ample cross-ventilation, and sensitively selected materials. But Sheahan says daylight, streaming in from four directions, was the key to conserving energy and creating an inviting workspace. The airy studio "is a gallery for our work," he explains, "as well as somewhere we can spread out and build models."

Clad in steel and (FSC-certified) wood, the house



Photos: Matthew Millman

is flanked by two other live/work projects the firm developed simultaneously. The urban site is just blocks from retail, making it convenient for the staff and prospective clients alike. And if drop-ins want to see the firm's eco-friendly strategies firsthand, they simply look up.—shelley d. hutchins